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## 1996 Hawk Watch Project Summary

by  
*Robert Kirker*

In Sept. 1996, the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club with help from several adjoining clubs, initiated in cooperation with HMANA (Hawk Migration Association of North America), a hawk watch at a private camp. This site situated on the Helderberg Escarpment affords excellent views northerly for over 180 degrees.

Full time coverage commenced on Sept. 7 and continued through Dec. 7. 452.6 hours of observation time was logged. We recorded 3413 hawks flying over the site during those observations. Some highlights from the reports are listed below.

The club trip on 9/14 produced the highest count of 810 hawks of which 763 Broad-wings. At least four Golden Eagles were recorded at the site. 1712 Broad-wings were recorded in the ten day period from 9/10 through 9/19. This was 91% of the total number of Broad-wings reported.

On 9/19, 475 total raptors passed through. Twelve species were observed including 2 Golden Eagles, 1 Goshawk, 1 Red-shouldered, 49 Sharp-shinned, 52 Red-tails, 280 Broad-wings, 19 Coopers, 25 Kestrels, 1 Bald Eagle and 1 Peregrine Falcon.

On 10/26, 105 Red-tails passed through. This number equals the 9th highest count of all 60 HMANA reporting sites in 1995.

On 10/29, twelve Red-shouldered Hawks flew by.

On 11/27, ten Rough-legged Hawks were recorded.

On 11/28, six Bald Eagles were reported - three immatures and 3 adults.

From our totals, we expect to be around the 21st highest % and the number of hawks should place us around 33% of all 60 sites. For an interior location, these figures are impressive.

Not surprisingly, 3 species make up 85% of the total. 60% Broad-wings, 18% Red-tails, and 7% Sharp-shins.

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Here are the grand totals for the species

Turkey Vulture	135
Osprey	55
Bald Eagle	15
Northern Harrier	35
Sharp-shinned Hawk	250
Cooper's Hawk	69
Goshawk	9
Red-shouldered Hawk	49
Broad-winged Hawk	1881
Red-tailed Hawk	696
Rough-legged Hawk	21
Golden Eagle	4
American Kestrel	69
Merlin	11
Peregrine Falcon	3
Unidentified Raptor	109
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3413</b>

seen:

I would like to thank all 41 volunteers from 5 bird clubs for their assistance. Without their generous giving of time, this project and its excellent coverage and results would not have been possible.

Finally, a sincere thanks to John Barron, the resident manager of the camp for his understanding and help throughout the migration season.

## ***Birding New York's Hudson Mohawk Region Published!***

The HMBC guide, *Birding New York's Hudson Mohawk Region*, is at the publisher and due back to the Club any day. Orders for the book will be processed shortly!



## **Web Surfers Notice**

HMBC is planning to go out on the Web. If you have some interesting sites we should link to or good ideas for info to put on our home page, please email: [re-cerg@crisny.org](mailto:re-cerg@crisny.org). Look for the web address in a future issue of *Feathers*.





## THE WINGS OF AUTUMN '96 POTLUCK QUESTS ALONG THE UPPER HUDSON *by Jim Sotia*

**26 Oct** A solitary Red Phalarope in winter plumage bobs leisurely in the rock-walled channel below Lock 4, near Stillwater. I have spotted it from a shaley rise overlooking the confluence of the Hoosick and Hudson Rivers. The hydraulics of the merging waters evidently roil the channel, sustaining an eddy effect with a mild chop. The idling Phalarope is being gradually eased up the channel toward the lock gate.

Rousing to the presence of minute, faunal surface life, the bird begins to pick casually at the water around it. Soon its swiveling intensifies with flurries of rapid beak thrusts.

I remain absorbed, given the rarity of the find in our area, fascinated by its feeding behavior. Eventually, the Phalarope settles back into itself, bobbing and peacefully drifting. A lone witness, I shoulder my scope and leave the bird to its sheltered contentment.

**1 Nov** A piercing breeze beneath dark, scudding clouds greets me at 9 AM on the shore of Fort Miller, below the Lock 6 dam. Upriver, a raft of a hundred or so Ring-billed Gulls lies this side of the current in the protected lee of land form.

Below them, a compact quartet of Bufflehead ducks bob and feed. The two males sport fresh black and white plumage. A bold accent of wildness, which seems somehow to tie the scene together.

As if a signatory to this view, a young Great Blue Heron appears, flapping silently low over the assemblage to settle casually on the edge of a nearby island. Facing the morning's con-

gregants, the heron slowly folds its sinuous neck and hunkers down, compressed against the sweeping chill.

Gulls, ducks, heron: how they define the harmony of this place.

**21 Nov** The wind chill over choppy water at Fort Miller hovers around 10 degrees at 10 AM. Stark is the absence of wildfowl.

Across the river, about 250 yards distant, a dog sits patiently in a camouflage canoe. Several duck decoys float nearby. A hunter in chest waders labors to drag the boat beneath overhanging shore cover. Knee-deep in water a few yards upriver, a Great Blue Heron is poised to jab at passing fingerlings.

I pan the shore with my spotting scope and return to the heron. It remains remarkably still. Simulation has been taken to new heights! Or lows, depending on your angle. The heron is also a decoy--surely not to draw herons, but (I am later told) to "reassure wary ducks."

The gunner bends to gather up his decoys. As he does, three Mallards fly over from down river, suddenly bank sharply, flaring as they wing rapidly beyond the reach of fire.

**3 Dec** For three days now, the Battenkill and Hoosick Rivers have been draining their respective, drenched watersheds, swelling the Hudson. I am standing alone here in Stillwater's village park on the Hudson's west bank. The river holds no evident bird life, but overhead a lone sleek Herring Gull plays the wind with compelling grace.



Above the adjacent Lock 4 dam, a dark, brooding expanse of burgeoning water rolls on. Cascading over the full length of the impounding wall, the smooth flow bursts, roaring and grinding with relentless force, inhospitable to avian and human life.

I follow the river's uproar as it gradually settles down, soon to meet the rushing Hoosick. Peripheral movement catches my eye. Previously unnoticed, thirty Mallards are peacefully feeding in a shadowed alcove about fifty yards down river. Its feeding viability has been formed by the river's rise.

I smile as I watch them. The ducks are dabbling for the succulents of a backyard lawn and picnic area.

An affecting counterpoint to the passing tumult.

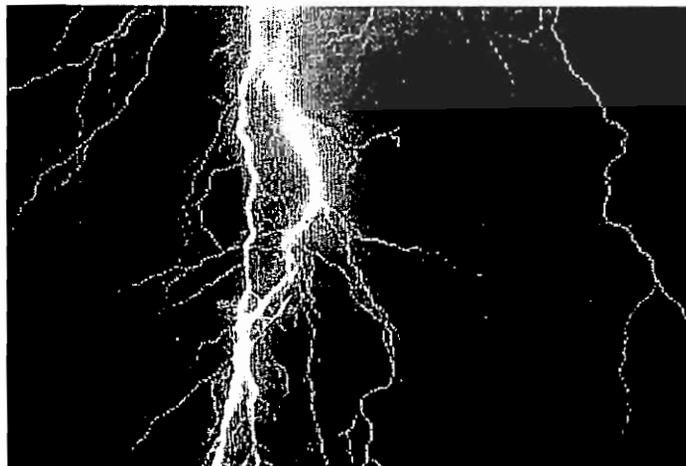
**15 Dec** From the shore opposite Stillwater, the Hudson appears devoid of bird life this morning. Perhaps there is some bird activity in the Lock 4, lower channel, up beyond the woods behind me (I had seen the Red Phalarope there in late October.)

I trudge up the old dirt road leading to an overlook. Sure enough, out there lies a raft of forty or so Mallards, more or less peacefully hunkered down. Four Hooded Mergansers move restlessly among them. A hush hangs suspended in the air. So much so, that my screened movement seems to inspire some wariness among the ducks. En masse, they begin to ease down the channel, but remain well within viewing distance. Not alarmed, just prudent.

Below me, a backwater slough lies cluttered with the soft-stemmed remains of summer, bare shrubs and stunted trees. At its edge, floats a single duck--apparently a Mallard. Lenses reveal it to be a tethered decoy! Its hinted, lifelike movements are sustained by subtle cross currents.

I am startled! Where there is a decoy, I assume there is a gunner. Perhaps watching me from a johnboat or canoe in the tangled cover of the slough.

I pick up my scope and quietly slip away.





## ECOS Tuesday Morning Cross-Country Ski Trips

Trips are free and open to the public. No registration required. Participants are divided by ability with a leader and sweep. Trips are planned for everyone from novice to experienced. Estimate 1 1/2 to 2 hours plus travel time. A trip may be cancelled or changed because of weather. If conditions are in question, call **ECOS, 370-4125**.

- Feb. 11 Thacher State Park. Meet at Rotterdam Square Mall near Sears at 9 AM.
- Feb. 18 Schenectady Municipal Golf Course (MUNY) - Meet at golf course parking lot off Golf Rd. at 9 AM.
- Feb 25 Schoharie Crossings - Meet at Rotterdam Square Mall near Sears at 9 AM.
- Mar 4 Saratoga Battlefield - Meet at Glenville K-Mart near diner and Rte. 50 at 9 AM or at the Battlefield Visitors Center Building at 9:30 AM.
- Mar 11 Pharaoh Lake ALL DAY TRIP - Bring a lunch!! 7.0 miles round trip. Skiing time estimated to be about 3 1/2 hours. Ski ability of at least competent beginner. Meet at Glenville K-Mart near diner and Rte 50 at 8 AM.
- Mar 18 Grafton Lakes State Park - Meet at Glenville K-Mart near diner and Rte 50 at 9 AM
- Mar 25 Leader's Choice - Call the ECOS office, 370-4125 for details.





## Field Trip Reports

### Niagara Frontier, 11/29 - 12/1, 1996

The Club's bi-annual trip to the Niagara River area to search for rare gulls attracted a large group of birders, in part because of the co-listing of this trip as a Federation of New York State Bird Clubs field trip. The trip started the day after Thanksgiving, under a constant threat of rain, with stops along the route between Albany and Niagara Falls, Ont. **TUNDRA SWANS** and two **BALD EAGLES** were a highlight at Montezuma NWR and Sodus Pt. produced Harlequin Duck and Snowy Owl. The Pt. also produced the first white-winged gull of the trip and the first of many identification puzzles. In this case, the predominant opinion was that the bird was a first-winter **GLAUCOUS** (based on size comparison to Greater Black-backed and Herring), but the bill lacked the typical strong bi-colored pattern. Similar minor controversies would be the theme of this weekend.

After a bit of confusion at the border crossing on the Canadian side, Saturday got off to a start checking out ducks, loons and grebes at Ft. Erie across from Buffalo. Along this part of the river we saw mainly waterfowl including a **NORTHERN PINTAIL**, **BUFFLEHEAD**, **COMMON GOLDENEYE** and all three **MERGANSERS**. We scoured the water control structures above the falls without much success, but several members of the group were able to pick up on a flying adult **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL** on the far side of the river. The barge area just above the falls turned up another **LESSER BLACK-BACKED** and an adult **GLAUCOUS GULL**. At least two **LITTLE GULLS** had been seen by other birders along the gorge below the falls when we arrived, but only a couple members of our group picked one out. At the Adam Beck dam great views of an adult **ICELAND (KUMLIEN'S) GULL** were had.

We continued down river to the Charlotte boat landing area. Almost immediately, several birders got onto an adult **LITTLE GULL** tooling up and down a short stretch of the river amidst the blizzard of **BONAPARTE'S**. Everyone in the group eventually had excellent looks at this bird and a second one that was found in the same area. Saturday ended up at the power reservoir behind Adam Beck where many gulls roost late in the day when the water has been drawn down. The viewing was good, but the birds were packed together on the ground which makes it harder to pick out unusual species than when the birds are in flight. A **GLAUCOUS GULL** and a very nice comparison of **GREATER** and **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULLS** were found and a bird which had been identified as an adult **THAYER'S GULL** by the birders already present had many scopes trained on it waiting for it to raise a wing. The eye seemed dark, but that wasn't convincing enough by itself. Unfortunately before we got a clear look at the bird's underwing, the whole group lifted off the ground. A couple of us were able to follow the bird and confirm the gray under-primary tips before the bird disappeared as the flock settled back down.

Sunday we basically repeated Saturday's routine, starting just above the Falls. Nothing new was found until we tried the road down to the foot of the Adam Beck dam. We had a nice close-up view of another adult **ICELAND GULL** to get things going. Then a dark-mantled adult bird was spotted. It was clearly more slate-colored than the pure black of a Greater Black-backed, but it was too large for a Lesser and the bird had bright pink, nearly red, feet. We studied the bird for quite a while, flying and perched. There was much

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**SPRING PROGRAMS TO FEATURE EXPERTS ON  
BIRD SONG, OWLS, FIRE ISLAND AND THE ADIRONDACKS**  
*All programs (except Annual Meeting) held at 7:30 PM at the Five Rivers  
Environmental Education Center, Delmar*

**Mon. Mar 3, 1997 Greg Budney, *Seldom Seen, Often Heard Wildlife of the Adirondacks***

The Adirondack Park is home to many of New York State's more uncommon or unusual species of wildlife. Hear their voices and learn how sound is an important means of exploring the natural world and enjoying these elusive creatures. This presentation will also cover basic concepts of how and why animals use sound for communication.

The speaker is Greg Budney, curator of the Library of Natural Sounds at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. The Library of Natural Sounds is the world's largest collection of wildlife sounds. Mr. Budney's work has taken him to many locations in North America, Africa, Antarctica, Central America, South America, and Europe.

**Wed. Apr 9, 1997 Annual Meeting and program on *Snowy Owls* with Dr. Paul Kerlinger**

<b>Location:</b>	<b>Russo's (formerly Oceans Eleven).</b>	<b>Dinner:</b>	<b>6 PM</b>
<b>Business:</b>	<b>7:30 PM</b>	<b>Program:</b>	<b>8:30 PM</b>

The Snowy Owl has been portrayed as a cyclic invader from its arctic breeding range, appearing in the northern US and southern Canada only when the lemmings it depends on for food undergo a population crash. In an informative and entertaining fashion, Kerlinger presents a different version of this northern nomad's natural history. By examining what we know about Snowy Owls during winter, migration and the breeding season, we see that Snowy Owls are not so different from other northern owls. Full frame slides of adult and immature, males and females help the audience learn to determine the age and sex of virtually all individuals that will be seen in the field and to appreciate how beautiful and well-adapted this animal is to its cold and unpredictable environment. In addition to learning about Snowy Owl plumage and natural history, Kerlinger's program provides helpful information for finding this and other elusive northern owls. Be prepared for a *chilling* story.

Paul Kerlinger currently lives and works in New York City as a writer, speaker and consultant. He received his Ph.D. from the State University of New York at Albany studying migration. He served for eight years as the director of the Cape May Bird Observatory and has recently studied the economics of birding and ecotourism in the US and Latin America. He is also the author of the well-regarded book *How Birds Migrate*.

**Thu. May 1, Fire Island National Seashore with Maria Wagenbrenner, Chief of Interpretation Fire Island National Seashore. Details in April *Feathers*.**

**Mon. Jun 2, Loons and Other Adirondack Wildlife with DEC Forest Ranger Gary Lee. Details in April *Feathers*.**



## PROGRAM REPORTS

### HMBC Christmas Party

Forty people gathered at Five Rivers for the annual HMBC Christmas party on December 2. In addition to the many delicious desserts provided by members, the group was treated to a wonderful slide/lecture presentation on Everglades National Park by John Green, a freelance naturalist from Massachusetts. John has visited the Everglades extensively and repeatedly, and has intimate knowledge of its natural history, its rhythms and cycles, and its management challenges.

As John eloquently explained, the history of this 1.5 million acre park has been a process of reclaiming its lifeblood, the water that overflows the banks of Lake Okeechobee and gives life to the myriad animals and plants that live there. Since the diversion of water through the construction of canals and dikes, parts of the Everglades have been starved of water, and it is said that the numbers of wading birds has dropped by 90%! Much of the water that is allowed through has become polluted by the nitrogen rich fertilizers used by nearby sugar cane farmers, causing further damage to the delicately balanced ecosystem. Much of the saw grass has been replaced by cattails, evidence of an overly nutritious water supply. On the bright side, John explained that although it is not likely that our Everglades will be restored to its original majesty, at least its vital importance as a unique and beautiful ecosystem has been recognized in recent history, and this has led to some hope for its future. Water is being rechannelled through an intricate system of waterway structures and portions of the Everglades that were starved are now or will soon be supplied with water.

This world-recognized ecosystem consists of a variety of habitats, each determined by a change of a mere few inches in water depth. From Florida Bay, with its forests of red and black mangroves, to the coastal prairie with its salt-tolerant plants, to the hardwood hammocks which thrive in a few feet of elevation, to the cypress swamps, to the "river of grass" itself, the Everglades is a small world in itself. Here, visitors may watch up close the feeding behaviors of the Wood Stork and the lovely Roseate Spoonbill. We can watch the gregarious interactions of Ibis and Anhinga, and marvel at the hunting technique of Red-shouldered Hawks and Osprey. This is one of the only places where one can find the white form of the Great Blue Heron, and a great place to see a wide variety of wading birds up close.

John's talk ended with a beautiful music/slide show which underlined the message that it is worth the effort and money needed to restore this place, which through human folly was very nearly lost.

*- Denise Hilton*



## Canada Geese in New York State

On January 6, 1997, about 35 people enjoyed a very informative, comprehensive, and well-illustrated survey of the status of Canada Geese in N. Y. State and the Eastern Flyway provided by Bryan Swift, waterfowl specialist of the N. Y. State Department of Environmental Conservation in Delmar.

Bryan told us that the Atlantic population, which breeds in Northern Quebec and migrates via the Atlantic Flyway, dropped precipitously from 1988 through 1995, while the Resident (locally breeding) population increased dramatically. The Atlantic population has had trouble nesting due to bad weather conditions, and has had a shorter breeding season than the Resident population. Also, feeding and the availability of ponds with grassy areas and farms for feeding yields large Resident broods. Incidentally, the two populations are not from the same stock -- the Resident population arose from introduced birds brought into the Northeast as ornamentals or live decoys, possibly bred in the Midwest, and are somewhat larger in size than the Atlantic population.

Bryan also described his projects using neck bands to distinguish Resident and Atlantic Flyway geese (see box). These bands have large codes printed on them visible at a distance.

Bryan has been with NYSDEC since 1984 and has been its waterfowl specialist since 1987. He has a B.S. from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry at Syracuse and an M.S. from U. Mass at Amherst, in Wildlife Ecology and Management with emphasis in avian habitats.

- Ann B 'Rella

### **NECK-BANDED GEESE SIGHTINGS REQUESTED**

Bryan Swift requests that persons sighting neck-banded geese call him at (518) 439-0725 with the following information:

Date, location, size of containing flock, exact code on band (do not guess but include any part of code), color of band, shape of band (conical or tubular).





## Upcoming HMBC Field Trips

### 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.

### Waterfowl of the Hudson River North of Troy

Sat. Mar 15.  
Coord: Dick Beeler 399-8557  
Bring a lunch and enjoy the day looking for early spring migrating waterfowl.

### Waterfowl of the Hudson River (Greene Co.)

Sun. Mar 23.  
Coord: Bill Cook 851-2678  
Spend this spring morning search from Coxsackie to Catskill for ducks and other interesting avian life.

### Vischer Ferry Waterfowl

Sat. Mar 29. Reservations: Mar. 21.  
Coord: Scott Stoner 464-0492  
A leisurely morning walk perfect for those just developing their waterfowl id skills.

### Southern Maine Coast

Sat-Sun. Apr 5-6. Reservations: Feb 15.  
Coord: Denise Hilton 785-6760  
Trip Leaders: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen  
Spend this get-away weekend along the Maine coast and find lingering wintering waterbirds as well as early migrant waterfowl and passerines. A special weekend lodging/meal package is being considered so please call by the reservation date to express your interest.

### Derby Hill & Montezuma

Sat or Sun. Apr 19 or 20.  
Reservations: Apr 15.  
Coord: Walt Sabin 439-7344  
Combine hawk watching and waterfowl ids at these prime locations. Last minute weather forecasts will determine the day of the trip.

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discussion and comparisons with various field-guide illustrations. SLATEY-BACKED GULL was a possibility, but the trailing white on the upper-secondaries was not real extensive, and some of us felt that the bird didn't really add up to anything obvious. A few of the local experts, including some who had experience with Slatey-backed, eventually had a brief look at the bird. Their consensus was that it was not a Slatey-backed. Eventually the bird flew up river and we were left with a big question mark. A bird identified as a HERRING X GREAT BLACK-BACKED HYBRID was reported on the Buffalo rare bird alert several times in the following few weeks. This was probably the bird we puzzled over.

Overall, the trip turned up nine species of gulls, plus the hybrid, and provided many excellent opportunities to study this challenging group at length. As usual, the Niagara Frontier stood up to its reputation as the Gull Capital of North America.

*Bill Lee  
(as told to Gregg Recer)*



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23 Scotch Mist Way  
Ballston Spa, NY 12020

or via e-mail to:

[recer@crisny.org](mailto:recer@crisny.org)

### Time to Renew HMBC Membership

Don't forget it is time to renew your membership. You should have received a membership renewal form with the December mailing. Please return it promptly with any updated address information. If you have lost or misplaced the renewal form, please call Gregg at 899-2678 to request a replacement. Don't risk missing an issue of the newsletter by letting your membership lapse!



*President's Corner: SOUNDS OF SPRING. The first Red-winged Blackbird in late February is the first sign of spring for me. Then it's the Common Goldeneyes and Canvasbacks on the rivers. Wood Ducks on the wooded ponds. Woodcock in the fields and the early songs of spring - Cardinal, Song Sparrow, Tufted Titmouse, and even the House Finch (or as I often call it, the Office Finch). It just keeps getting better and better with each passing day. Then the tropical migrants return and birding is at its best. A good birder is challenged to identify all the sounds of spring. And remember, they are sounds - not noises. How many times have birders and non-birders alike described a noise they heard? Birds don't make noise. Planes, cars, disco and opera singers do, but*

*birds make wonderfully unique sounds. Anyhow, back to business. I shall hope to see you at the Club's Annual Meeting, at which time two Rare Bird Finder awards among others will be given for 1996, compared to five in 1995 (King Eider, Ruff, Sabine's Gull, Wood Stork, Great Gray Owl). We also have another ambitious field trip schedule and the programs, thanks in large part to Scott Stoner, are top notch. If you haven't been to one lately you owe it to yourself to discover how great they are. Have a great Spring and we'll see you on the trails.*

*- Frank Murphy*

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## THE AMERICAN Woodcock

by Denise Hilton

This small (slightly larger than a Robin), stocky, mottled-brown bird with its long bill and large round eyes located far up and back on its head usually remains camouflaged in its habitat of woods' edge and old field. Its yearly courtship ritual of spiraling flight alternating with its unmistakable "Peent" call has become a welcome harbinger of spring. Last year, Scott Stoner and I set out to better understand the American Woodcock by observing it on several occasions and recording its observable behavior. We have since done some research on the bird, and would like to share our findings with you, as its time of year has come around again.

Anatomically, the most easily noted features of the Woodcock are its long bill and those large, set-back eyes. There is a concentration of blood vessels and nerve endings at the tip of the flexible beak, as well as tooth-like structures. These adaptations create a sensitive tool for probing the soil, and grasping earthworms and larval insects, the Woodcock's diet of choice. The large eyes help the bird see in the waning light of dusk, and their location help it see both above and behind as it feeds.

The Woodcock produces a variety of sounds, many associated with courtship:

"Peent"- This loud, nasal note can be heard several hundred yards away from the bird. It is usually produced by the male, as he struts on the ground between aerial flights. It has also been reported to be made by the female following copulation.

"Tuko"- Before each "peent," the male bird utters a soft, gurgling note, sometimes compared to a "hiccupping" sound. This sound can only be heard within about 50 feet of the bird.

"Twitter"- A twittering sound is produced as air passes over the outer flight feathers as the male ascends for his flight song.

"Chirp"- This fluid note is made by the male 5 or 6 times during each descending, zig-zag flight.

"Cac-cac-cac-cac"- This hoarse, scolding note is very quick and buzz-like. The male gives this sound in flight while chasing another male away from its singing territory.

In *The Book of the American Woodcock*, William G. Sheldon describes a typical courtship session. After alighting in the field, the male immediately begins to peent. Each peent is preceded by a soft, gurgle-like "tuko."

After over 150 peents in the 5 minutes, the bird rises. At 50 feet above the ground, the wingbeats create a twittering sound, as the bird

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## Feathers



continues its ascent in smaller and smaller circles, to about 275 feet above ground. He then zig-zags down to the ground, repeating a series of liquid chirps as he flies, landing very near the spot where he began. He begins peenting again, this time for about 2 minutes, and then ascends into another spiraling flight.

If one of the other males sharing the field intrudes upon his territory, he will chase the intruder off with a loud "cac-cac-cac" warning.

As a female approaches, the male's peenting stops. The "tuko" continues as he approaches the hen, his wings raised. Copulation takes place on the ground, and the female immediately flies off to prepare her nest. She will raise her brood alone. After copulation, the male rises into the air for a last spiraling flight.

In *The Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold describes his observations of the Woodcock in Sand County, Wisconsin. Leopold reports that the first courtship flights occurred at 6:50 pm on the first warm April evening, and began one minute later on each successive evening until June 1, when the first flight occurred at 7:50 pm. Leopold concludes that the bird can tolerate no more than 0.05 foot-candies of light to begin his evening flight. He notes that for each bird, the series of flights lasted about an hour, although a moonlit night had the effect of prolonging the time of the flights. Leopold also notes the early morning flights of the Woodcock, which began around April 5 at 5:15am, with the start-time receding by 2 minutes per day until June, when the flights began at 3:15am. Based on the more rapid advance toward darkness in the start-times of the morning flights as opposed to those in the evening, Leopold concludes that the Woodcock is only able to tolerate 1/5 as much light in the morning hours.

In our observations of May 1, 7 and 17, 1996, Scott and I observed the first stage of the courtship flight in the "new field," on the east side of Five Rivers, east of the Wild Turkey Trail. We noted that the first series of peents was always the longest, ranging from 60-75 peents in anywhere from 5 to 7 minutes. The length of time that elapsed between flights then ranged from about 1

to 5 minutes, with the flight times averaging about a minute. We noted the "tuko" sound on one occasion, and observed up to three males displaying in the same field.

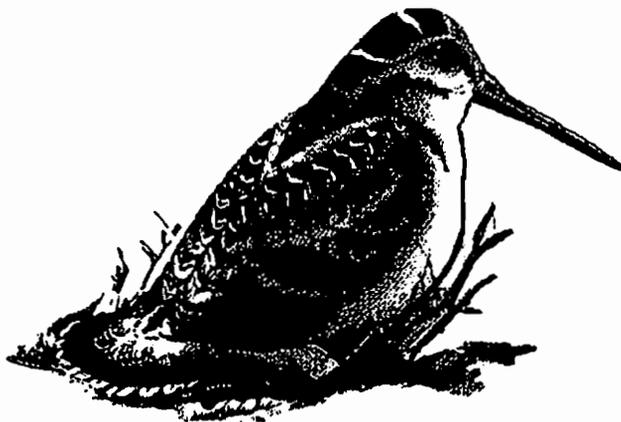
Scott and I are looking forward to making more observations this spring, and encourage you to do the same. Old fields with adjacent woodlands are the Woodcock's habitat, and some local places where they have been seen are Five Rivers, Ann Lee Pond and Saratoga Battlefield. There are two local events featuring the bird this spring, including our Club trip to observe the Woodcock at Five Rivers at 7pm on April 29, and Five Rivers' own trip to the field at 7pm on May 2.

Please note that this is a twilight-to-dark experience. Much of the courtship ritual is heard, although we did get some lucky glimpses of this small bird in its amazing flight. So, bring your binoculars, but mostly, be prepared to listen to the wonderful sounds of the American Woodcock. See you in the field!

### Sources

*The Book of the American Woodcock*. William G. Sheldon. 1971, The University of Massachusetts Press.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS AT 5 RIVERS

### Five Rivers EEC 25th Anniversary

Five Rivers EEC and its support organization, Five Rivers Limited, will celebrate their 25th Anniversaries this year. Events planned to celebrate this milestone include a reception on Friday, May 30 featuring an art and photography exhibit entitled "Five Rivers in Four Seasons" and a birthday party on June 14, the anniversary of the Center dedication, with music, dancing and a barbeque. A self-guided history tour of the Five Rivers site is also being developed as part of the anniversary festivities.

### Exhibition: John James Audubon the Man, the Art, and the Movement He Inspired

Sat - Sun, April 26-27

Come celebrate the 212th birthday of the man who started the movement. An exhibition featuring M. Bernhard Loates' exquisite lithographs of Audubon's *Birds of America*, on loan from the Audubon Society of New York State, Inc., will be on display throughout the weekend. Interactive art for kids, too!

### Framing Audubon's Birds

Sat, April 26, 2:00pm

From about 1820-30, Audubon painted all the 435 known North American birds in life size and natural habitat. Join us on the great naturalist's birthday for a commemorative outing as we compare his pictorial ideas with our field sightings.

### Courtship of the American Woodcock

Fri, May 2, 7:00pm

John Burroughs only witnessed the woodcock's unusual courtship flight on three occasions. Much has changed for this unusual-looking gamebird since then. Join us as we survey the meadow in search of this most remarkable display.

### Mother Goose

Sun, May 11, 2:00pm

What better way to celebrate Mother's Day than to peek in on a mother goose and her eggs. Mothers should be on the nest and fathers should be nearby. We'll walk to several nest sites to observe how the families are progressing.

### The Early Birder

The early birder gets the bagels! Plus some great birding in Five Rivers' woods, fields, and wetlands. Join us at 7am for coffee and bagels as we watch birds at the feeder, and then go outdoors for a bird walk. Beginners are welcome! Bird walks are held on Thursdays, April 10, 17, 24 and May 1, 8 and 15. Thereafter, keep on coming as we switch over to early morning flower walks.





## THE TRAVELING BIRDER: WEST TEXAS

by Gregg Recer

As the son of native Texan parents, I always heard (I think only partly tongue-in-cheek) that "they grow everything bigger in Texas." This, it turns out, applies to birding in Texas too. The list of species recorded in Texas is bigger than for any other state. This is attributable to a combination of tremendous habitat variety, a biogeographic location which straddles both east/west and north/south, and, perhaps, because Texas is *just plain big*. Naturally, this makes Texas one of the top birding destinations for travelers from all over North America. Eager to get in on the action, Cathy Graichen and I spent 10 days in late April, 1994, making a giant counter-clockwise loop birding some of the best places in the Lone Star State.

The first thing you have to prepare yourself for when birding Texas, is that, unless you're retiring there, there is never enough time to cover all the places you want to bird. We had been birding in Texas once before, spending late December and early January along the coast and in the Lower Valley. This

trip our main target was West Texas, particularly Big Bend and Guadalupe Mountains National Parks. However, the lure of the Lower Valley is hard to resist, and since we knew we could look for some birds which were not around in winter, we included a significant detour in our itinerary to hit the hotspots around McAllen before continuing west.

We had spent a week with my parents in the New

Orleans area. After warming up on hoards of warblers which wouldn't arrive in upstate New York for another month, we headed west on I-10.

On our first day we drove over to Cameron Parish, La., in the southwest corner of the state. There are three major National Wildlife Refuges plus a huge expanse of very accessible Gulf beach packed into this otherwise very agricultural area. The refuges are wintering areas for huge numbers of waterfowl, but large concentrations of nesting long-legged waders are a main feature of the area in spring and summer. In a few hour's casual birding, we found all the heron and egret species, along with great views of specialties including Roseate Spoonbill, Purple Gallinule, Neotropical

Cormorant, White-faced Ibis, Mottled Duck and Fulvous Whistling-duck. We even picked up a couple of lifers: a beautiful male Scissor-tailed Flycatcher on a wire, and a single Sandwich Tern among the hundreds of Royals, Caspians and Least's resting along Holly Beach. The Lane's Texas Coast guide in-

cludes Cameron Parish as a kind-of honorary extension of the Texas coast and it's well worth spending some time there. Our Texas birding extravaganza was well under way and we weren't even across the state line yet!

We drove a long stretch all the way to Kingsville that evening, saving High Island and other spring coastal locations for another time. The next morning we made a bee-line for Bentson Rio-Grande





## Feathers

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State Park, stopping on the King Ranch long enough to admire several close-up views of Crested Caracara. On our first trip to the Valley, I was really impressed with the birding, but at the same time I was not too impressed with a lot of the scenery, most of which amounts to row crops and trailer parks. However, Bentson and Santa Ana NWR are two little jewels of semi-tropical forest which have been saved from the excesses of development. They are really fun places to bird. We spent the full day birding these two refuges, plus a patch of abandoned ranch-land north of McAllen which is part of the Rio-Grande Valley NWR.

In Benston and Santa Ana, we spent a lot of time chasing down unfamiliar songs. Flycatchers topped the list with Brown-crested and Couch's Kingbird as well as the easily-recognizable Great Kiskadees. I quickly re-learned the vocalizations of Green Jays and Chachalacas and we picked up quite a few other birds we had found on the previous trip including Ringed Kingfisher, Ladder-backed and Golden-fronted Woodpeckers, White-winged and White-tipped Doves, Long-billed Thrasher, Bronzed Cowbird, Altimira Oriole, Olive Sparrow, Least Grebe and Black-bellied Whistling-duck. One of my favorites, despite their abundance, were the Great-tailed Grackles. Their variety of really bizarre vocalizations, including sounds like snapping twigs and short-wave-radio whistles and static, are just incredible.

Our one-day Valley detour gained us several of the summer-resident species we had not seen in winter, although we missed out on Hook-billed Kite and Red-billed Pigeon (it's always good to have a reason to go back). As we continued west, we worked on raptors and began our desert birding. We had good looks at White-tailed, Harris', Swainson's, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks on the Rio-Grande Valley NWR north of McAllen. In the same area, we also found our first Roadrunner. As we headed west toward Del Rio, we lost count of the number of Crested Caracaras we saw along US 277 — it could have easily been 100. We got to Del Rio late that evening and headed into Big Bend National Park the next day.

Our first two nights in Big Bend we camped in the Cottonwood campground near the western end of the main park road. This area of cottonwoods, mesquite thickets and Chihuahuan desert made for great birding. Birding just around the campground and on a couple of the near-by trails we found many of the desert and border specialties including Scaled Quail, Curve-billed Thrasher, Vermilion and Ash-throated Flycatchers, Hooded Oriole, Verdin, Bell's and Gray Vireos, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Chihuahuan Raven, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Pyruloxia, Rufous-crowned and Black-throated Sparrows, Spotted and Canyon Towhees and Golden-fronted and Ladder-backed Woodpeckers. A Common Blackhawk cruised right over the campground, giving us a great view, and Turkey Vultures sunned themselves behind our tent in the morning. A hike up one of the canyons along side the Rio Grande featured White-throated Swift and the incredible descending song of the Canyon Wren.

On the third day we moved camp up to the Basin area at about 5400 feet in the heart of the Chisos Mountains. In the spring and summer, this is the busiest part of the park, as people look to evade the heat of the river-valley areas. Nevertheless, the birding is great, even right in the campground, and the scenery is fantastic. We shared our campsite with a very vocal Cactus Wren and had Lesser Goldfinches and Scott's Orioles frequenting the weed patches and blooming Century Plants just behind our site. A Roadrunner perched on a rock in our site and fluffed up its back feathers to sun itself each morning. In addition to the bird-life, we had Javalinas trotting through the campsite at all hours!

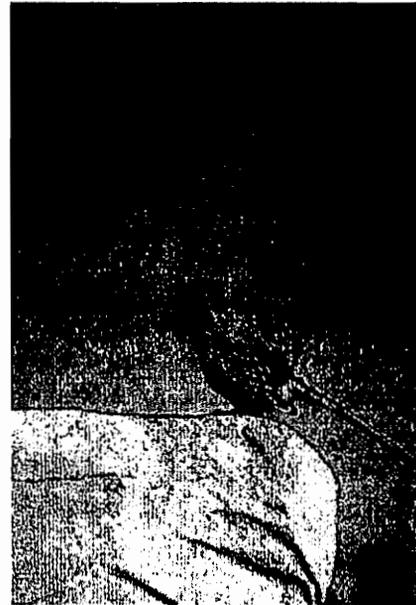
The number one birding reason to spend time in the Chisos is to find a Colima Warbler. This species' one known nesting outpost north of Mexico is in the Chisos. The birds arrive in April and are usually found above 7000 feet. Therefore, to find one you have to climb the infamous "Colima Warbler Trail." The route is a steep climb up the side of Emery Peak and an even steeper descent. The hike starts in the desert and works its way through a transitional zone to a high meadow area, and then into a mature pine forest. It's a



tough climb and the round-trip is over 10 miles, but the birding is great, the surroundings are wonderful and it's one of the most memorable day-hikes I've ever done.

The climb provides a lot of good birding (and good excuses to stop and take a breather). We had Say's Phoebe, Black-headed Grosbeak, Spotted Towhee, Pyruloxia and Rufous-crowned, Black-throated and Black-chinned Sparrows in the desert and transition zones. When we reached Laguna Meadow we met up with a group of British birders making the same pilgrimage. They had hauled scopes up the mountain, an idea we had considered and immediately rejected. They headed off and we stayed a bit longer to catch our breath. Just as we were starting off again, one of the Brits came running back up the trail toward us. They had two Colimas up around the bend in the trail. We moved as fast as we could and got up to the spot they had scoped out. The birds were far off in some heavy scrub and neither Cathy nor I got a very convincing look. While we were straining to see the Warblers, one of the Brits got on a Lucifer Hummingbird in his scope. The bird perched very agreeably, and everyone got good scope views of this tiny curve-billed hummer (we were happy the Brits had chosen to suffer with their scopes). However, the Colima had eluded us at this spot.

We continued the hike on more level ground. Up in the mountain-top forest different birds started turning up. Among the highlights were Acorn Woodpecker, Mexican Jay, Bushtit and Hutton's Vireo. We were getting a little antsy as we started across the trail which cuts between Laguna Meadow and the descending trail. About half-way along the trail, we heard a strong trilling song and we quickly locked on to the singer. A Colima sat perched atop a bare snag in full sun singing away. Even though this species is not especially showy, the effort involved in finding the bird and the crippling view we had made this life bird a real standout. We studied this one bird at length before heading to the top of the descending trail and a stop for lunch. As it turned out, we encountered a couple more Colimas one the way down, but none of the looks matched the first one.



We spent another day-and-a-half in Big Bend hiking several other trails in the Chisos and adding a few other interesting species such as Inca Dove, Whip-poor-will and Common Poorwill (along the Park road at dusk), Bell's Vireo, Hepatic Tanager, Hooded Oriole and Painted Bunting. We headed north with a brief stop over in the Davis Mountains adding species including Cassin's Kingbird, Western Bluebird, Scaled and Montezuma Quail, Western Scrub Jay, Bewick's Wren and Lark Sparrow. Eventually we ended up in Guadalupe Mountains National Park to camp for another 3 nights.

The birding in Guadalupe National Park, and nearby Carlsbad National Park in southern New Mexico, combine many of the same Chihuahuan desert species as Big Bend with birds more typical of the Rockies. Two areas that we concentrated on were McKittrick Canyon in Guadalupe and the Rattlesnake Springs outpost of Carlsbad. Highlights here included desert species including White-winged Dove, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Vermilion Flycatcher, Cassin's Kingbird, Black and Say's Phoebes, Canyon Towhee, Virginia's Warbler and Black-chinned Sparrow. At higher elevations in Guadalupe we found species such as Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Red-naped Sapsucker, Stellar's Jay, Dusky Flycatcher, Bushtit, Western Tanager, Lazuli Bunting and White-crowned Sparrow. The



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area is also great for scenery both above ground, with the huge promontory of El Capitan dominating the landscape, and below ground, where the Carlsbad Caverns flowstone formations are deservedly legendary.

Our birding trip ended with a drive to my Grandmother's house in Ft. Worth and an eventual return to New Orleans for the flight back to Albany. We totaled 218 species with some real standout lifers, got to see some of the best desert landscapes the country has to offer and made a nearly complete circumnavigation of the largest state in the lower 48. In two birding trips to Texas, we've only really just scratched the surface; and looking back on this last trip now only makes me more anxious for our next trip there this winter!

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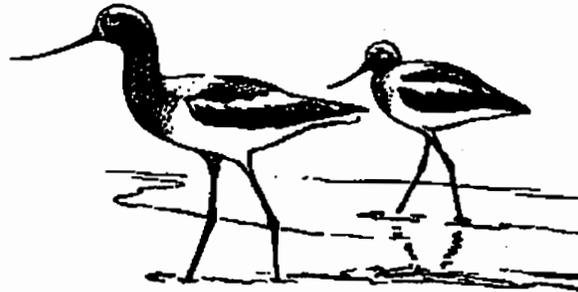
*Lives of North American Birds.* Ken Kaufman. 1996, Houghton Mifflin Company.

*The Sand County Almanac.* Aldo Leopold. 1966, Ballantine Books, NY.

I would like to thank Scott Stoner for his research assistance and editing, and especially for introducing me to this wonderful bird!

**Editor's Note:**

Just as this issue went to press Woodcock arrived back at Five Rivers and were heard calling and displaying in good numbers. Check out the fields east of the Wild Turkey Trail, as well as the Orchard area of the Old Field Trail.





## Upcoming HMBC Field Trips

(Consult your field trip schedule or Birdline (439-8080) for trip details)

### Derby Hill & Montezuma

Sat or Sun, Apr 19 or 20. Reservations: Apr 15  
Coord: Walt Sabin 439-7344

A long day-trip of hawk and waterfowl watching to two of the prime sites in New York State. Because weather can make or break a good hawk flight, this trip is subject to last minute cancellation. Call Birdline (439-8080) for last-minute details.

### Peebles Island State Park

Sun, Apr 27

Coord: Frank Murphy 373-1933

Spring migrants, especially warblers, will be the focus of this evening trip.

### Woodcock at Five Rivers

Tue, Apr 29

Coord: Ray Perry 399-3962

On this evening trip we hope to experience the sights and sounds of the woodcock's courting "sky dance."

### Featherstonhaugh State Forest

Sat, May 3

Coord: Ray Perry 399-3962

This will be a day trip to this very productive area in Schenectady County searching for migrant passerines and nesting woodland species such as Wild Turkey and Ruffed Grouse.

### Christman and Limestone Rise Preserves

Sun, May 4

Coord: Debbie Ellinger & Philip Johnson

370-5921 (wait through vet. message)

This morning trip will focus on migrant songbirds at one or both of these Nature Conservancy Preserves (depending on water levels).

### Five Rivers

Wed, May 7

Coord: Scott Stoner 464-0492

This evening trip will search for migrant songbirds as well as herons and breeding Wood Ducks. Displaying Woodcock should also be active at dusk.

### Birds and Breakfast

Sat, May 10

Coord: Denise Hilton 785-6760

Our annual celebration of Spring. Come join a birding group or bird the grounds on your own and then rally for refreshments and a list compilation at 10:30 AM.

### North American Migration Count

Sat, May 10

Coord: Frank Murphy 373-1933

Spend the day birding and counting what you see, then report your results by county. Call the Birdline (439-8080) for details.

### Vischer Ferry Migrants

Sun, May 11

Coord: Frank Murphy 373-1933

(note change in coordinator)

This trip is timed for the peak of passerine migration. Warblers and other songbirds will be a main focus, as well as marsh species such as rails and bitterns.

### Ann Lee Pond

Tues, May 13

Coord: Terry Altenhofen 765-3725

Gerry Colborn 272-1544

This evening trip will be in search of migrant warblers, vireos, flycatcher and other songbirds.

### Bauer Environmental Park

Thur, May 15

Coord: Denise Hilton 785-6760

This new evening trip will focus on woodland songbirds.

### Century Run

Sat, May 17

Compiler: Bob Yunick 377-0146

1527 Myron St.

Schenectady, NY 12309

See how many species you can find in 24 hours in the 11-county Hudson-Mohawk Region. Results should be sent to compiler by May 29.

### Nott Road Park

Sun, May 18

Coord: Walter Ellison 456-6224 (home)

442-4320 (work)

This will be a morning trip to this very productive park in the Town of Guilderland, searching for warblers, orioles, tanagers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Wood Duck.

### Carter Pond

Sun, May 18

This trip has been cancelled.



# High Peaks Audubon

Founded 1973

ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN REGION  
New York State

"If you're travelin' the North Country fair,  
Where the winds hit heavy on the borderline..."

--Bob Dylan

***"On the Borderline" will be the theme of the 50th Federation Annual Meeting on September 12-14, 1997, in Lake Placid, hosted by High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc.***

Saturday night's featured speaker will be Dr. David Bird of the Avian Science and Conservation Center of McGill University with a presentation on "Technology & Birds." Among other high-tech projects, he will describe tracking Golden Eagles from the James Bay Lowlands with satellite transmitters. When he's not in the field or classroom, David writes a popular column for *Bird Watcher's Digest*.

As an added bonus, the film "Power - One River - Two Nations" will be screened on Friday evening at the Lake Placid Center for the Arts. The saga of the James Bay Cree vs. Hydro-Quebec, this new documentary by Magnus Isacsson and Glen Salzman offers a behind the scenes look at the most important environmental victory of our times. The film is entered in this year's Sundance Festival. The evening will open with a Mohawk invocation.

Field trips to the Boreal Heritage Preserve, Bloomingdale Bog and other northern habitats will be offered throughout the weekend, including Sunday morning trips for the convenience of delegates.

Headquarters will be the Lake Placid Hilton Resort. Mike Peterson will chair the meeting and Bud Lanyon will chair the Saturday afternoon Papers Session. Those interested in presenting papers are urged to contact Dr. Wesley Lanyon, 2398 North Lakeshore Drive, Louisa, VA 23093 (703) 967-0691 (through April), or P.O. Box 531, Keene Valley, NY 12943 (518) 576-9714 (May onward). Papers on northern species are especially welcome.

For further information and registration write to High Peaks Audubon Society, RR1 Box 230, Elizabethtown, NY 12932.

# REGISTRATION FORM

## Federation of New York State Bird Clubs 50th Annual Meeting September 12, 13, 14, 1997 at the Lake Placid Hilton Resort 1 Mirror Lake Drive, Lake Placid, NY

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

Delegate:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Address:

**Room:** Contact the Lake Placid Hilton Resort directly at 518-523-4411 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 \$84 (single) or \$94 (double) plus tax per room per night.

**Registration:** (incl. film, speaker, papers session, and field trips, except box lunch)

\_\_\_\_ \$20.00 postmarked \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 postmarked \_\_\_\_\_ \$10 student  
on/before July 15 after July 15

Registration: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Meals:

Fri. evening:

Dinner Buffet # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$26.85 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday:

Breakfast # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$ 9.15 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Box Lunch (Field Trips) # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$11.00 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Deli-Buffer Lunch # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$11.00 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Banquet # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$28.10 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# \_\_\_\_\_ Prime Rib of Beef

# \_\_\_\_\_ Lemon Pepper Chicken

# \_\_\_\_\_ Poached Salmon

Meal Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

### Field Trip Registration

*Field trips will be filled as registrations are received.*

I would like to attend the following (please check and indicate number of people):

Fri., Sept. 12 \_\_\_\_\_ Sat. Sept. 13 1. \_\_\_\_\_ Sun., Sept. 14 1. Spring Pond Bog \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Whiteface Mtn. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ and/or 4. \_\_\_\_\_  
5. \_\_\_\_\_ with paddle \_\_\_\_\_

I would be interested in: Canoeing: \_\_\_\_\_ Mountain hiking: easy \_\_\_\_\_; moderate \_\_\_\_\_; difficult \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc.**

Send this form and payment to:

Newman Tryon, P.O. Box 2, Elizabethtown, NY 12932

For information: Mike Peterson (518) 873-2052





## Field Trip Reports

### Fort Edward Field Trip, February 8, 1997

This excursion was a combined trip of HMBC and FNYSBC (Federation of NYS Bird Clubs). It was a cold, sunny day. The temperature started out at 15 degrees and didn't rise very much. There was a biting breeze most of the day. A long caravan of cars wound its way around the towns of Fort Edward, Argyle and Kingsbury looking for wintering birds.

We saw many **ROUGH-LEGGED HAWKS** with a few very good looks. An adult **BALD EAGLE** made a surprise appearance. One flock of **HORNED LARKS** yielded a **LAPLAND LONGSPUR**, but unfortunately the flock flew away before most of the birders could see it. All together the group of 40 birders spotted 27 species. (Some seen by only a few people) At the end of the day we were disappointed that none of the Short-eared Owls made an appearance. Although the weather was cold and the overall number of species was low, the group spirit remained high.

- Barb Putnam

### Birds and Snowshoes, February 9, 1997

Snowshoes were not even discussed as the fifteen participants settled down in the Five Rivers bird room. Cold, clear weather with a slight breeze encouraged lots of avian visitors. A **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW** was present at the feeders. **HOUSE FINCHES** and **PURPLE FINCHES** were feeding from the same feeder, allowing for a split-screen comparison of these two often-confused birds (the birds aren't confused; those trying to ID them often are). Of four Purples observed, two at the feeders and two in the field, all were females. A single **SONG SPARROW** fed on the ground among hordes of **AMERICAN TREE SPARROWS**.

After our fill of backyard bird watching, we headed out to the fields on the Wild Turkey Trail. The group was teased with fleeting glimpses of **NORTHERN FLICKERS** in flight. Luckily the **EASTERN BLUEBIRDS** were much more cooperative. Distant views became up-close encounters as a flock of seven allowed a close approach. Full sunlight highlighted the brilliant blue backs of the males. The general consensus was that the bluebirds were the highlight of the walk.

As we compiled the list back indoors a new year bird was added to the Five Rivers list — the ever-popular **BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD**. An accipiter species, definitely, maybe a **COOPER'S HAWK**, brought our morning list to a final tally of 22 species.

- Ray Perry

### Hudson River South, March 23, 1997

Cold arctic air and clear sunny skies welcomed twelve hardy birders to the Coxsackie boat launch at 8:00 am. Thirty-eight species were found between Coxsackie and Catskill. The "waterfowl" included one Horned Grebe, Mute Swans, Canada Geese, American Black Ducks, Mallards, Northern Pintail, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Hooded, Common and Red-breasted Mergansers. Other highlights were adult and immature Bald Eagles, a nice view of a Red-shouldered Hawk soaring overhead, a Red-bellied Woodpecker excavating a potential nest cavity, a Fish Crow announcing itself, and some Turkey Vultures which had been back for a month already.

- Bill Cook



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## **UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

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

### ***Fire Island National Seashore: Arranged and Rearranged by Nature*** Thursday, May 1, 1997 (note special day)

This barrier island off the south shore of Long Island hosts Piping Plovers, beautiful beaches and even a hardwood forest. Join Maris Wagenbrenner, Chief of Interpretation of this unique National Park Service site, for an in-depth exploration of its natural history and management. Her slide presentation will focus on the habitats of this Long Island wilderness area. Maris will also describe an ongoing bird, tick and mammal study, and conclude with a discussion of some of the stewardship problems inherent in protecting the resources while managing visitors near such a populous area.

### ***Loons and other Adirondack Wildlife*** Monday, June 2, 1997

DEC Forest Ranger Gary Lee has been exploring and protecting the Adirondacks for over 30 years. During that time, he has become the acknowledged expert on the birds and wildlife of that boreal environment. Join him for an evening of slides of moose, bear, deer and especially loons! Gary will delight us with shots of loon nests with young, distraction displays and much more.

### **Mark your calendars for these fall programs:**

Wednesday, September 3: **Hawk ID and Hawk-watching.** Bob Budliger will teach the ever-tricky subject of hawk identification, and Bob Kirker will update us on the success of last year's hawk watch and plans for 1997.

Wednesday, September 10: **Identification of Fall Warblers.** Walter Ellison will try to take the confusion out of identifying these less-colorful yet still beautiful fall visitors.

Monday, October 6: Back by popular demand, free-lance naturalist John Green will show as the wilds of Maine's **Baxter State Park**, along with the **Gannets of Bonaventure.**



## **PROGRAM REPORTS**

*by Denise Hilton*

### **Birds of New York, Chris Keefer**

On the cold, dark mid-winter's evening of February 3, Club members and guests were treated to the brightly colored birds of New York, presented in a slide presentation by Chris Keefer, columnist for The Daily Gazette. Remarkably well photographed by Chris's husband Dave Keefer, these pictures not only helped us appreciate those hardy birds which populate our winters here in the Empire State, but also made us long for the warmer days ahead when we will once again enjoy the beauty of our spring and summer visitors.

Many comments were made on the fine quality of the photographs, the well paced narration, and the audience's over-all enjoyment of this fine program. We thank Chris and Dave for sharing with us this tantalizing breath of spring in the midst of such a cold winter!

### **Birdsong--The Reason for the Music, Greg Budney**

On the evening of March 3, a crowd of about 70 people attended an excellent program on birdsong, presented by Greg Budney, curator of Cornell Ornithology Lab's Library of Natural Sounds. As curator, Greg oversees the Library's precious collection of over 100,000 sounds, including the songs of at least 5,200 of the world's approximately 9,000 species of birds.

During the course of the program, Greg touched on many of the mysteries behind birdsong which always seem to intrigue us so much, and he also answered many of our questions on subject.

One of the primary reasons why birds sing is to establish and maintain a territory. The song acts as a kind of "fence" surrounding a male's territory, and sometimes, as in the case of the Cardinal, a female's nesting site as well. The familiar springtime sound of male birds of the same species counter-singing can be seen as a song-duel over territory. Although not a song, the drumming of a woodpecker is often used the same way. Greg gave the example of a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker which had staked out its territory, and then maintained it by drumming on the metal "Posted" signs located in its area!

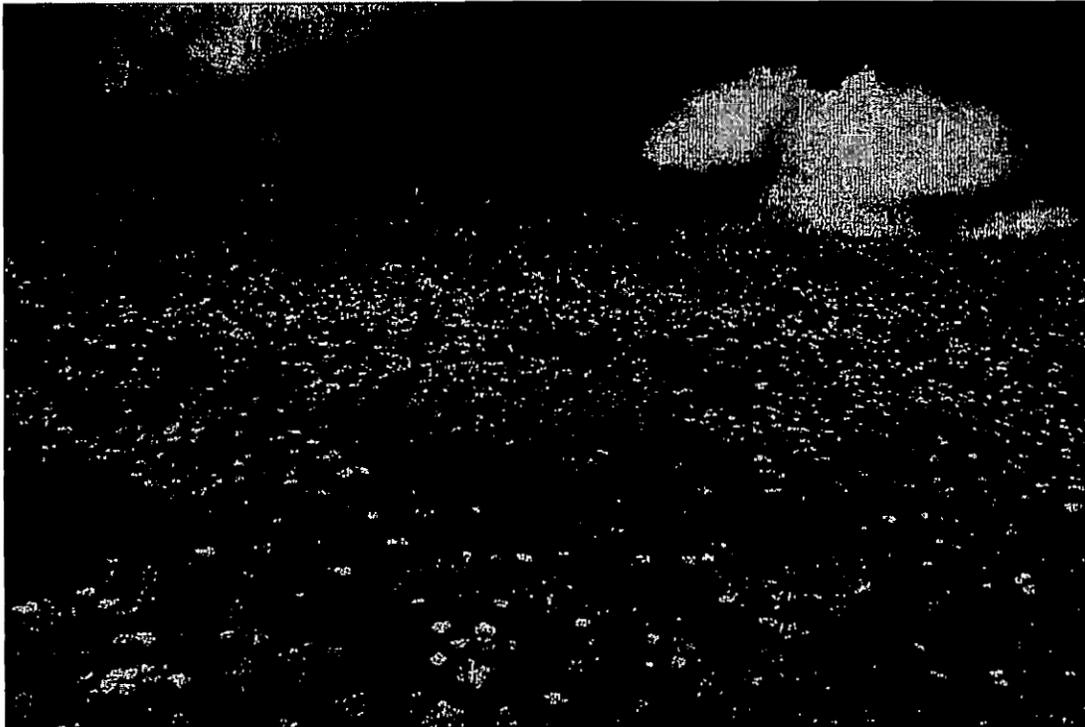
The other essential reason why birds sing is to help propagate their species. With birds, it is usually the female who chooses her mate, using indicators of general health and genetic fitness. One of the ways in which the male advertises his genetic aptitude is by singing. The Mockingbird, for example, is judged by the number of songs of other species he can repeat, and he will repeat them all day, and even into the night during breeding season. Some other bird sounds other than singing that are associated with courtship are the drumming of the Ruffed Grouse and the whistling sound of the wind on the modified flight feathers of the Woodcock during its spiraling flight.



# Feathers

The process by which birds learn their songs varies among species. In most cases, there is an essential time period during which the young bird must be exposed to the song of its parents. A period of practice then ensues, until the song is perfected and ingrained in the bird's memory. Sometimes, as with the *Empidonax* Flycatchers, the song of the individual species seems to be genetically programmed. For instance, if a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher is raised in the nest of a Least Flycatcher, the young Yellow-bellied will learn to sing the song of its own species, rather than that of its adoptive parents, even though it has only heard the song of the Least.

This fascinating program was a fine introduction to the field of Bio-Acoustics, the study of how animals use their sounds, which is one of the major uses for the LNS sound collection. The recordings are also useful in the study of Taxonomy and conservation. We thank Greg for sharing his wonderful sounds with us, and for an informative program.





## **BASIC CREEK BIRDING & BANDED GEESE**

Basic Creek Reservoir will be opened for light recreational access this year on a trial basis. An access permit will be required. The permits can be obtained from the City of Albany Department of Water and Water Supply and will cost \$10 for a standard permit, \$5 for Albany city residents and \$5 for Senior citizens (62 and older).

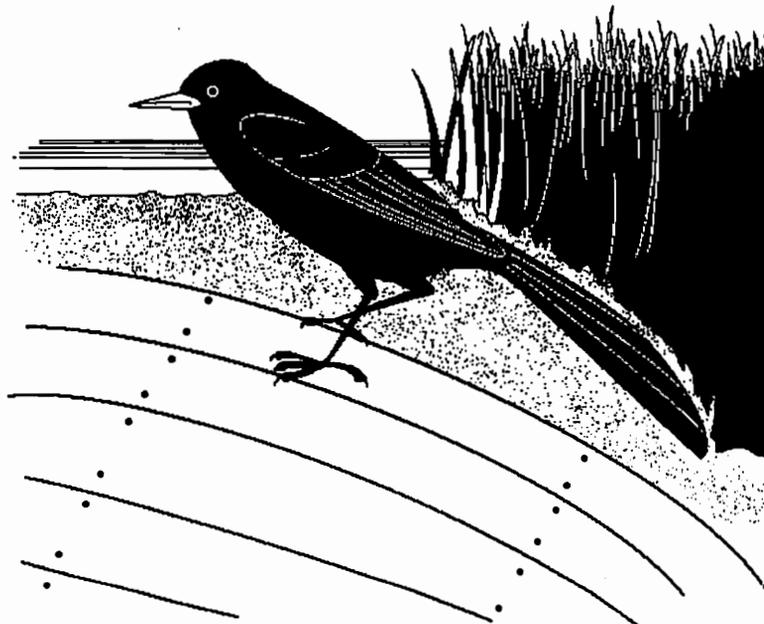
The Water department can be contacted at:

Department of Water & Water Supply  
35 Erie Blvd.  
Albany, NY 12204  
Attention Customer Service  
518-434-5300

Numbers from neck-banded Canada Geese and other waterfowl can be reported to Latham Department of Environmental Conservation Office. Ask for Sal Kazalano at 783-3918.

## **Volunteers Sought for ECOS History & Nature Program**

The Environmental Clearinghouse of Schenectady (ECOS) has offered the Mohawk River Program for the past 18 years to fourth grade students. The students get to walk along the Mohawk River and learn about the history and ecology of the area. They also get to go on a two hour boat ride up the river to see how a lock works and learn about the history of the Erie Canal. They get to touch and hold several examples of river wildlife as well. It is a wonderful experience for the students. We are looking for volunteers to help lead the trail hikes. They are each two hours long and there will be a training session before the program begins. Volunteers are paid \$15 for each session they lead to cover travel expenses, etc. The program will be held from May 27-30 and June 2-4. If you are interested in participating on any of those days please contact ECOS at 370-4125. Thanks in advance!





## HMBC BOARD FOR 1995 - 1996

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

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

### Oops!!

A few of you may have picked up copies of HMBC's new birding guide *Birding New York's Hudson-Mohawk Region* at a Club meeting, only to have another copy mailed to your home address. If this happened to you, please accept our apologies for this administrative mix-up. Extra copies can be returned at any Club meeting. Thank you for your patience!

# Feathers



*President's Corner: This is my last report as Club president (hold the applause!). It has truly been an honor and a privilege. We have one of the best birding clubs in the country - ask around on your travels and compare. Over 50 field trips per year, a top notch newsletter, exceptionally good programs, a professionally run nutline (which some still refer to as the Birdline), and now a nice Birding book of our own. Most of all we have an incredibly diverse membership - friendly, knowledgeable, inspiring and fun. As a group we have accomplished a lot in large part because so many of you have allowed me to impart my personal philosophy which is to always keep the birds' perspective in mind. I always try to think what would be best for the birds and try to act accordingly. On a recent trip to southern Venezuela I was totally amazed to witness untouched wilderness rainforest as far as the eye could see during a 100 mile flight. I never imagined how much is still out there. And I will never forget how all this is linked to our own wilderness in our backyards, especially the Adirondacks and the Catskills. It all starts at home and on that note, I would like to thank every one of you for being a part of this Club and for trusting me with this responsibility. I can't begin to list all the names of those who have helped in one way or another, but I do want to thank Scott Stoner for making it all possible. Good bye for now and I shall hope to see you in the wild! Good birds, and good birding. Chow.*

*-Frank Murphy*

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## PAUL KERLINGER DISCUSSES SNOWY OWLS

*by Denise Hilton*

About 70 HMBC members and their guest gathered at Russo's/Ocean's Eleven to mark the Club's annual meeting and dinner. After a plentiful and delicious buffet, and a business meeting expertly chaired by out-going president, Frank Murphy, the attendees were treated to a fine program on the subject of Snowy Owls, presented by Paul Kerlinger.

Paul has done extensive research on these birds, and generously shared his knowledge with us. He explained that this very heavily-feathered owl is second only to the penguin in the effectiveness of its insulation. It breeds in the Arctic tundra regions, including Upper Quebec, Hudson Bay, western Alaska, Northern Scandinavia, and Northern Russia. In this brutal environment, a 50% reduction in clutch size is not uncommon, with anywhere from 0 to 8 fledglings surviving an original clutch of 2 to 10 eggs. The young are hatched in mid-July, and are ready for their long, 2,000 mile migration by the following winter.

As the Arctic is fickle in its menu, the Snowy Owl has learned to adapt to a changing diet. Although its preferred food supply consists of lemmings and voles, it has been known to consume a wide variety of animals, including young geese and ducks, ptarmigans, gulls, rabbits, fish, ground squirrels, mice and even poodles! (YES, POODLES!) During years when the lemming supply is low, the Owls are more likely to come farther south during the winter migration, giving us more opportunity to observe them. So, what may seem advantageous to more southerly birders actually reflects a stressful situation for the Snowy Owl. A similar, irruptive pattern of migration is seen in Hawk Owls and Great Gray Owls, as opposed to the more regular migratory patterns of Long-eared, Barn and Burrowing Owls.

Most of the migrating Snowy Owls seen in latitudes as low as ours are young, first-year birds. For a much more likely (albeit unbearably cold) chance at seeing a mature Owl, Paul recommends Calgary, where they can generally be found within a 5 minute drive of the airport.

The following classes can be useful for identification of the Snowy Owl according to age and sex. The bird matures at 1 year of age.

Class 1: Adult Male - From pure white to lightly barred

Class 2: Immature Male - Lightly to distinctly barred

Class 3: Adult Female - Distinctly to well barred

Class 4: Immature Female - Well to very well barred, dark in appearance

Also for identification purposes, the female Snowy Owl is generally larger than the male,

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Needed*

*Field Trip Reports*

*Annual Meeting Results*



and the young of both sexes have a "dirty" appearance, with smudge-like dark markings around their neck and tail areas. Paul compared their appearance to that of children who have not washed well.

Paul Kerlinger gave a fun and informative talk about the Snowy Owl, and gave many of us added insight into and appreciation of this rare and beautiful bird.

### HMBC Elects Officers and Board Members

The 1997-98 officers elected at the meeting are:

President:	Ann B'Rells
Vice President:	Jackie Bogardus
Secretary:	Barb Putnam
Treasurer:	Gregg Recer

New board members are:  
Carl George and Denise Hilton

The remaining board members currently serving terms are:  
George Hanson, Bill Lee and Linda Parr



### Treasurer's Report

The summary of the Annual Meeting's treasurer report is shown below

#### INCOME

Annual Meeting	44.70
Book Sales	3376.00
Dues Income	6985.00
Int Inc	1508.90
Reist Sanctuary	785.50
Sales Income	71.50
T-shirt Sales	81.22
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>12852.82</b>

#### EXPENSES

Birdline	527.78
Book Expenses	4201.73
Charity	250.00
Christmas Count	460.38
DEC Campership	180.00
Dues	50.00
Federation '96	-1177.11
Field Trips	208.43
Insurance	606.00
L&P Fees	25.00
Mailing	1170.12
Membership	132.26
Office	5.93
Printing	1409.70
Program	913.90
Publications	23.99
Publicity	87.15
Records	104.57
Social	32.87
Taxes	558.37

**TOTAL EXPENSES** 9771.07

**TOTAL INCOME - EXPENSES**  
3081.75

Cash on Hand	-1591.00
CD	1288.42
Checking	3163.85
Savings	220.48

**OVERALL TOTAL** 3081.75





## Upcoming HMBC Field Trips

(Consult your field trip schedule or Birdline (439-8080) for trip details)

### John Boyd Thacher State Park

Sat, June 21

Coord: Kate Beale & Bob Boehm 295-7994

This morning trip will be in search of breeding species including flycatchers, vireos, thrushes and warblers. Ear-birding will be emphasized.

### Saratoga Spa State Park

Sun, June 22

Coord: Andi Simard 885-6368

This morning trip will focus on breeding woodland species of this beautiful park in Saratoga Springs.

### Albany Pine Bush

Wed, Jul 9

Coord: Laura Sommers 768-8105

Spend the evening looking for the common Pine Bush birds.

### Bear Swamp

Sat, Jul 12

Coord: Jocelyn Cole-Calkins & Ron Calkins 768-2911

This morning trip in southern Albany County will look for specialties among the blooming rhododendrons.

### Up Yonda Farms

Sun, Jul 13

Coord: Linda White 792-4446

A new HMBC trip to the Warren County Environmental Education Center, located in Bolton Landing near Lake George to look for Adirondack breeders.

### Saratoga National Historical Park (Battlefield)

Sun, Jul 20

Coord: Ann B'Rells 355-5615

A Sunday morning walk will look for the resident grass-land species.

### Grafton Lakes Area

Sun, Jul 27

Coord: Jackie Bogardus 283-6603

Explore the Dunham Reservoir in Grafton Lakes State park looking for breeding warblers and other summer songbirds.

### Newburyport, MA & So. NH Coast

Sat. & Sun. Aug 16-17

Coord: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen 899-2678

Reservations: July 1.

Spend the weekend looking for shorebirds and early fall migrants. One day will be spent on a regularly-scheduled whale watch boat out of Newburyport which have been productive for both whales and pelagic birds.

### Peebles Island State Park and Adjoining Mohawk River

Sun, Aug 17

Coord: Gary Goodness 272-5830

A morning walk will be spent in search of migrant passerines and shorebirds.

### Mohawk River Cruise

Sun, Sep 7

Coord: Denise Hilton 785-6760

Birding Guide: Bob Budliger

Reservations: Aug 1

A variation of the successful trip at last year's Federation meeting. Cruise the Mohawk and eat pizza as we view the waders, shorebirds and other river-friendly birds.

Barn Owl





## Field Trip Reports

### Vischer Ferry March 29, 1997

After a seemingly endless winter, the Saturday before Easter dawned promisingly sunny and comfortable warm. A group of twelve participants gathered at Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve for an instructional field trip to hone our skill at waterfowl identification, and to enjoy the friendly, early spring air.

As we slowly worked our way down the main dirt road with trip leader, Scott Stoner, we stopped at all the ponds and marshes, and examined each very carefully and at great length. We were very well-rewarded for our careful study, as we identified ten different species of ducks. With Scott's patient help, the participants had very close looks at **AMERICAN WIGEON, GADWALL, HOODED MERGANSER, NORTHERN PINTAIL, RING-NECKED DUCK, COMMON GOLDENEYE** and both **GREEN-** and **BLUE-WINGED TEAL**.

Some land bird highlights along the trail included **BELTED KINGFISHER, TURKEY VULTURE, EASTERN PHOEBE, NORTHERN FLICKER** and spectacular fly-over of a **BALD EAGLE**. The total number of species for the trip was 34.

On our way out by car, we made a brief but very worthwhile stop at a pond on the north side of Riverview Road, between the second and third entrances to Vischer Ferry. Here we were treated to very close views of **WOOD DUCK** and both **BLUE-** and **GREEN-WINGED TEAL**.

As I write this report two days after the trip, we are being pelted with the most severe winter storm of the season, and Saturday's mild weather seems like a dream. But this is early spring in upstate New York, and winter hasn't

gotten word yet that the war is over. In the end, warm temperatures will prevail, and soon we will be walking the same Preserve looking for warblers!

*- Denise Hilton*

### Southern Maine Coast April 5-6, 1997

Twelve birders traveled to Portland, Maine to spend the weekend searching the marshes and rocky headlands of the state's southern coast for wintering birds and early spring migrants. The timing of the trip was somewhat experimental, since we had not birded this area so late in the winter (or early in the spring) before. If nothing else, we knew we'd have the beautiful scenery of Cape Elizabeth, Scarborough Marsh, East Point and Cape Neddick to marvel at. And, it turned out, there was plenty of quality birding to go around too.

Saturday morning we started out at The Maine Audubon Nature Center at Scarborough Marsh. A good mix of waterfowl was complemented by several long-legged waders including **LITTLE BLUE HERON, SNOWY EGRET** and **GLOSSY IBIS**. As we worked our way through Cape Elizabeth we picked up several of the lingering sea ducks including large numbers of **COMMON EIDER, WHITE-WINGED SCOTERS** and **LONG-TAILED DUCKS** (aka **OLDSQUAW**). We also found **RED-THROATED** and **COMMON LOONS** and three grebe species — **PIE-BILLED, HORNED** and **RED-NECKED**. A bonus of the time of year was the opportunity to see many of the species including the loons, grebes and Long-tails in full breeding plumage. The Long-tails were especially interesting since most of us had very little experience with breeding-plumaged males.



We had hoped that the Ivory Gull which had present in the Portland area for many weeks would still be present the weekend of the trip. Unfortunately, it had not been seen for almost two weeks. However, we were able to find an ICELAND GULL in the harbor area. Saturday evening was topped off by a displaying AMERICAN WOODCOCK right next to the restaurant parking lot.

Sunday began with some light rain. We started at East Point in Biddeford Pool and added a few new species to the trip list including SNOW GOOSE, BRANT, and BLACK and SURF SCOTERS. We had an extraordinarily close look at a breeding-plumaged RED-NECKED GREBE as well as more Long-tails and good scope views of PURPLE SANDPIPERS. Just as we were leaving Biddeford Pool, we spotted some cormorants perched on a rock in the bay. A view through the scope showed them to be breeding-plumaged GREAT CORMORANTS, a life bird for several in the group, and another chance to study a plumage most of us don't see very often.

The rain quit mid-morning and we continued down the coast finding a few more new species as we went. The highlight were several small groups of HARLEQUIN DUCKS at the Cliff House in Ogunquit. This was another lifer for many of the participants.

*- Gregg Reecer & Cathy Gratchen*

**Peebles Island State Park**  
April 27, 1997

Participants: Jackie Bogardus, Jane Davies, Joan Armstrong, Lee & Lyn Thomas, Carolyn McCreesh, Kevin P. McCreesh, Heidi Klinowski, Matt Gallinger, Lou Esch, Marianne Esch, Bill & Christine Lee, Donna Zimmer-

man, Jeff Marx, Laurie Rayno, Bruce Goldfaden, Jean & Samuel Katz, Kristina MacCormick, Joan Cipriani, Frank Murphy - leader.

Description: The shadbush trees were in peak bloom and quite spectacular. Bird migration was on the light side but we did manage to see some first of the year birds like SPOTTED SANDPIPER, CHIMNEY SWIFT, HOUSE WREN and GREAT EGRET. Best bird of the day was a snowy white first winter plumage ICELAND GULL seen from the southern tip of the island standing on a rock in the water with HERRING, RING-BILLED and GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULLS.

Other Birds Identified: DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, CANADA GOOSE, MALLARD, BLACK DUCK, WOOD DUCK, COMMON MERGANSER, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, KILLDEER, ROCK DOVE, MOURNING DOVE, DOWNY, HAIRY, NORTHERN FLICKER, EASTERN PHOEBE, TREE SWALLOW, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, TUFTED TITMOUSE, AMERICAN ROBIN, EUROPEAN STARLING, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, NORTHERN CARDINAL, SONG SPARROW, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, FIELD SPARROW, HOUSE FINCH, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, HOUSE SPARROW. Total: 40 Species.

*- Frank Murphy*

**Christman's Sanctuary  
and Limestone Rise**  
May 4, 1997

Early on a cold and rainy Sunday, seven birders met to explore these two Nature Conservancy properties for migrants. Spring is just arriving in the Helderbergs, and windy conditions kept most of the birds hunkered down - at least for our visit.



We stopped first at Christman's Sanctuary in Duanesberg. Spring rains had swollen the Bozenkill, and the water levels were high. (The first bird we spotted was a **MALLARD** flushed from the soggy fields.) We couldn't cover the entire property, but we were treated to some fine waterfalls. Unfortunately, we saw very few birds - residents or migrants. The only warblers observed were some **YELLOW-RUMPS** moving along the canopy. A **COOPER'S HAWK** that emerged from the trees as we headed back to the cars provided the highlight.

Nearby Limestone Rise provided us with a better sample of resident species including **YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER**, **BROWN CREEPER** and **WILD TURKEY**, but few migrants. The only warbler at this spot was an **OVENBIRD** that we heard but did not see.

*- Debbie Ellinger & Phil Johnson*

### **Birds and Breakfast** May 10, 1997

Like most other days in May this year, the morning of the 10th was cold and gray. At 6AM our first group of five participants led by Doug Steele set out, followed at 7AM by another group of 5 led by Scott Stoner and Al Mapes. At 8AM, George and Kay Hanson led our final group of 5 birders.

While the groups were in the fields and forests of Five Rivers, I was treated to a variety of birds at the feeders, including **CHIP-PING**, **WHITE-THROATED** and **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS**, a large number of **AMERICAN GOLDFINCH**, and a **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK**. A **RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD** was also spotted near the viewing window.

At the compilation breakfast, a total of 74

species were counted, including **BROWN THRASHER** and the following warbler species: **BLUE-WINGED**, **NORTHERN PARULA**, **YELLOW**, **CHESTNUT-SIDED**, **MAGNOLIA**, **BLACK-THROATED BLUE**, **BLACK-THROATED GREEN**, **YELLOW-RUMPED**, **BLACKBURNIAN**, **PRAIRIE**, **PALM**, **BAY-BREASTED**, **BLACK-AND-WHITE**, **OVENBIRD**, **NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH**, and **COMMON YELLOWTHROAT**.

I want to extend a thank you to all of the group leaders, as well as to the participants, and hope that despite the less than perfect weather, the sight and sound of spring birds was warming to all who attended.

*- Denise Hilton*

### **Bauer Environmental Park** May 15, 1997

About 15 participants turned out to explore this new site, opened last spring by the Village of Colonie. The evening was cloudy, and as we birded the approximately 1/2 mile boardwalk trail, a light rain began to fall.

The wooded area brought **GREAT CRESTED FLY-CATCHER** and **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK**. The short spur trail that leads through the marshy area brought **BALTIMORE ORIOLE**, **YELLOW WARBLER** and **COMMON YELLOWTHROAT**. **WOOD THRUSH** and **SONG SPARROW** were heard throughout and a flock of **CEDAR WAXWING** were observed before the trip set out.

*- Denise Hilton & Scott Stoner*

### **Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve** May 29, 1997

On one of the first warm evenings of the spring, 23 people enjoyed a walk at Vischer Ferry and the sight or sound of 27 species. Some were fortunate to hear a **VIRGINIA RAIL**



calling partway down the dirt road, and the sounds of **COMMON MOORHEN** in the last pond on the right side of that road. More discernible to the ear but almost as hard to see was **MARSH WREN**, also around that last pond. People got distant scope views of **SPOTTED SANDPIPER** and a **YELLOWLEGS** so far away that even Bob Budliger would not attempt to speciate it! Other species on the trip included **BELTED KINGFISHER**, **GREAT BLUE HERON**, **VEERY**, **BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER**, **BALTIMORE ORIOLE** and **SWAMP SPARROW**. Warbler migration was nearly over, as evidenced by the presence of the **BLACKPOLL**; other species included **YELLOW**, **COMMON YELLOWTHROAT** and **AMERICAN RED-START**. Many thanks to Frank Murphy and Bob Budliger, who co-lead the trip and enabled me to leave early to attend a family event.

- *Scott Stoner*

## **George Landis Arboretum** May 31, 1997

Despite clouds of black flies so thick that they entered our eyes and mouths and practically obscured the view, nine people enjoyed a really splendid morning of birding. Led by World Series of Birding veteran George Steele and myself, the group found about 40 species in 3 hours. Highlights for many were the excellent views of a number of hard-to-see songbirds, including **OVENBIRD** and **SCARLET TANAGER**. George took us to an area where he had found the tanager with a school group a few days before. Not far from that place we found first a female and then a most "cooperative" male (a long-sought life bird for Denise). Other take-home memories were scope views of **VEERY** and **OVENBIRD**, along with the more easily seen **EASTERN TOWHEE** and **BOBOLINK**. Other species included **WOOD THRUSH**, **CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER**, **RED-EYED VIREO**, **BLUE-WINGED WARBLER**, **EASTERN WOOD**

**PEWEE**, **BROWN THRASHER**, **GREAT CRESTED FLY-CATCHER** and **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK**. Many thanks to George for his expertise and teaching ability, and I highly recommend this as a late spring birding location (details in the book). Thanks also to Denise Hilton for recording the birds from this trip.

*Scott Stoner*

## **Northern Saratoga County Trip** June 1, 1997

Seven birders met at 7AM near Lake Luzerne to take a morning trip in extreme northern Saratoga county. The temperature was mild and it was threatening rain as we gathered. We carpoled over to Eddy Road and Tower Road. It drizzle on and off that morning. Our spirits were not dampened.

We had a total of 58 species. Highlights included 15 species of warbler: **NASHVILLE**, **YELLOW**, **CHESTNUT-SIDED**, **MAGNOLIA**, **BLACK-THROATED BLUE**, **YELLOW-RUMPED**, **BLACK-THROATED GREEN**, **BLACKBURNIAN**, **PRAIRIE**, **BAY-BREASTED**, **BLACK-AND-WHITE**, **REDSTART**, **OVENBIRD**, **YELLOWTHROAT**, and **CANADA**. There were many **ALDER** and **LEAST FLYCATCHERS**, multiple **VEERY**, numerous **RED-EYED VIREOS**, and a very good number of **WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS**. A pair of **SCARLET TANAGERS** provided a long and satisfying look. The best views of the day had to be of **MAGNOLIA WARBLERS** - there were at least four different males and they posed on several occasions.

- *Barb Putnam*



## **PROGRAM REPORTS** *by Scott Stoner*

On Thursday, May 1, 1997, we were treated to not one but two programs by talented National Park Service personnel! In the featured presentation, Maria Wagenbrenner, Chief of Interpretation at the Fire Island National Seashore (FINS) spoke on "Fire Island -- Arranged and Rearranged by Nature." Following this, David Taft of the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge gave an impromptu update to his well-received talk of March 1996 on some of the issues affecting Jamaica Bay.

Regarding Fire Island, Ms. Wagenbrenner explained how this 32-mile long island has been shaped and reshaped by natural forces. It was formed by the erosion of headlands at Montauk Point at the eastern tip of Long Island; a process called long shore transport of sand extended from a spit 8 - 10 thousand years ago to still changing land we see today.

There are 17 private communities now on Fire Island; FINS was established in 1964 in response to the heavy development of beach areas to its west, and includes wilderness as well as more developed areas for visitors, including nature trails, life guarded beaches, marinas and camping facilities.

She took us on a virtual tour of FINS, first east to west along this long narrow island, then in a cross-section from ocean to bay. The easternmost Park Service area is actually on mainland Long Island, as the William Floyd Estate in Mastic Beach; its 600 acres offer extensive natural habitats in addition to the historic property of one of signers of the Declaration of Independence. Moving over to the beach, the easternmost point is at Smith Point, at the southern end of William Floyd Parkway.

The small visitor center there is the gateway to FINS' wilderness area. The southernmost habitat is the ocean beach. Driving is allowed along the ocean beach, which can present a conflict with efforts to protect the Piping Plover, which breeds on the beach in limited numbers. So-called "enclosures" are placed around plover nests. A species of tiger beetle, extirpated from the area for a number of years, is not planned for reintroduction to this suitable habitat, despite press speculation to the contrary.

Moving north (inland), one next reaches the primary dune system, which is key to holding the island together. It's populated by vegetation adapted to sand, that can store water. Dunes form when wind-borne sand is interrupted and dropped by obstacles such as beach grass.

Behind the primary dune and before the next, or secondary dune, is an area referred to as swale. Species here include Fowler's Toad and black racer. The secondary dune is an old primary dune that has migrated inland. Behind this is a heavily vegetated area, described as thicket or maritime forest. This may only be a thicket of shrubs, but in some areas it is truly a forest, with trees such as American Holly, sassafras and shadblow. Sunken Forest at the Sailor's Haven visitor area is such a place. The trees of FINS are small, and exhibit a phenomenon known as salt-pruning, in which wind-driven salt from the ocean tends to limit growth beyond a certain height.



Another habitat is the freshwater bog, where the water table is above the ground, and characterized by ferns, mosses and cattails. The salt marsh, along the northern (bay) shore of fire island, has plants such as glasswort, salt meadow hay, and birds including herons. The northernmost habitat is the Great South Bay itself.

There is considerable research underway at FINS, including a banding station under the direction of Dr. Paul Buckley, who spoke at the Club's annual dinner in 1996.

Issues at FINS include endangered species protection, tick management (Lyme disease is common there), deer management and coastal management. Deer management is a topic that engenders a wide range of opinions, people do live in the private communities on the Island, and deer feed on vegetation. A project is underway to control the deer via immunocontraception; does are given a protein that prevents sperm from fertilizing the egg.

The most important and most controversial issue, however, is that of coastal management, and the FINS policy of administering zoning laws. For instance, it is illegal to build on the dune. Furthermore, structures within the wilderness area, if damaged beyond a certain point, will not be replaced.

An overwash occurs when water from the ocean goes over Fire Island into the bay (not uncommon in storms), a breach is defined as the situation where water from the bay then flows back to the ocean. If a breach (between the ocean and the bay) occurs, action can now be undertaken under the breach contingency plan to close it. Several years ago, farther east in the Westhampton area, a breach occurred that was 300 feet wide. By the time paperwork was completed to close it, it had grown to 1/2 mile across. Thus, in 1994 a breach contingency plan was adopted that will allow for swifter and more economical action. If a breach occurs in the wilderness area, the plan is to make an assessment, and to close it if there is a danger to the south shore of Long Island.

There is also a plan for beach re-nourishment, which entails pumping sand from farther out in the ocean to the ocean beach, to build up the beach. This is planned for all of Fire Island except the wilderness area.

In conclusion, Maria noted the many public programs held at FINS, and welcomed us to visit. She highlighted the fact that the banding station at the western end of FINS, near the Fire Island lighthouse, welcomes interested visitors with advance notice; contact Scott Stoner or Denise Hilton for details.

In his presentation, David Taft proudly described how Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge has been named an Important Bird Area, and that the formal dedication ceremony will take place on June 20. He also updated us on activities at the Refuge, from moths to Osprey to Barn Owls to Mute Swans and salamanders. Much is happening at Jamaica Bay, and, as always, he welcomes our visits.



## HMBC BOARD FOR 1995 - 1996

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George Hanson	885-5467
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Carl George	393-0629

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Jr. Activities:	vacant	

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

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:

recergr@cristny.org

### The HMBC Birdline Committee is looking for a Few Good People!

Work on the Birdline is important, interesting, and at the forefront of most of the area's birding activity. But the effort required is more than can be handled by just one or two people. We are in the process of forming a Birdline Team of 6 to 10 birders to share in this valuable service to the Club and the birding community. There are roles on the Team for Compilers, who retrieve the messages called in to the Birdline; Script Writers, who convert it into a presentable form; and Voices, who read the scripts onto the Birdline "tape". Access to E-Mail is particularly valuable for exchanging information with other team members. If you can help, and want to be in the middle of What's Happening, send an E-Mail to: <Lou.Esch@worldnet.att.net> - or - Call Lou Esch on 399-0313 or Jackie Bogardus on 283-6603 - or - Leave a message on the Birdline.



## **Cerulean Warbler Atlas Project**

The Cerulean Warbler is a species of special concern throughout the Northeast and is a candidate for federal listing as endangered. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is sponsoring the Cerulean Warbler Atlas Project. Participants will be helping to produce a detailed breeding bird atlas and conservation guidelines for this colorful forest denizen. To join the network of volunteers for the 1997 season or for more information, contact the Lab of Ornithology at

Cerulean Warbler Atlas Project  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
159 Sapsucker Woods Rd  
Ithaca, NY 14850  
Phone: 607-254-2446  
Fax: 607-254-2415  
e-mail: [forest\\_birds@cornell.edu](mailto:forest_birds@cornell.edu)  
web site: <http://www.ornith.cornell.edu>

## **Birding Guide to be Revised?**

Not in our lifetimes! However, we are still interested in hearing about birding sites in the Hudson-Mohawk Region that didn't make it into the guide. We would welcome anyone who knows of a site they think might be of interest to other members to submit an article about it to Feathers. Even a brief notes on relatively unknown sites with possible birding potential will be appreciated.

- editors, *Birding New York's Hudson-Mohawk Region*

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## POSTER CONTEST NATIONAL AUDUBON SOCIETY CAPITAL REGION CHAPTER

**Theme:** Wildlife in Winter

**Eligible entrants:** Children ages 12-14 in the Capital Region

**What to Enter:** A poster of any media (pencil, pen, markers, paints, crayons, collage, et. al.) will be accepted. The poster must be no larger than 22" by 28". All posters must be marked with the following information: Name, age, address, home telephone number.

**Entry Deadline:** Dec. 1, 1997

**Drop off points:**

Backyard Birds Nature Shop  
Rt 9  
Clifton Park, NY 12065

Wild Birds Unlimited  
1660 Western Ave  
Guilderland, NY 12203

Bird Lovers Specialty Shop  
1530 Columbia Turnpike  
Castletown, NY 12033

Entries may also be mailed to  
National Audubon Society  
Capital Region Chapter  
PO Box 487  
Latham, NY 12110

Chapter judges will decide on winning posters based on creativity depicting the theme, "Wildlife in Winter". Judges decisions will be

final. Winners will be notified by phone. All entries will be displayed at the Colonie Town library prior to January 8, 1998. Two first prizes and three runner up prizes will be awarded.

For more information, contact:

Sowmya Sundararajan  
54 Woodlake Road, Apt #8  
Albany, NY 12203  
452-1906



### **In This Issue...**

*Program Reports*

*Upcoming Field Trips*

*Breeding Bird Volunteers  
Needed*

*Field Trip Reports*

*Annual Meeting Results*



## **In Memoriam: Richard D. Stoner**

We mourn the recent death and remember the life of HMBC member Richard D. Stoner, father of Scott Stoner. Born in Iowa in 1919, the son of a dentist, he was an Eagle Scout and accomplished amateur naturalist. After college, he served in the U.S. Army and U.S. Naval Reserve. In 1950, he received his Ph.D. in zoology and parasitology from the State University of Iowa.

In 1950, he moved to Long Island where he began a distinguished career at the Brookhaven National Laboratory. His research interests in the Division of Microbiology included the effects of benzene on immune responses and leukemogenesis and radiation effects on immune mechanisms. He was also responsible for diagnostic protozoology and parasitology for the Lab. He was a member of many professional societies and a consultant to the Office of the Surgeon General.

Retired in 1981, he continued his research endeavors at Brookhaven as a Research Collaborator, and as a consultant to other institutes. He didn't fully "retire" until the mid 1990's; even then he continued diagnostic parasitology, specifically tick identification.

Perhaps his greatest professional legacy was not the volume of research that he published, but rather the great extent to which he helped and taught others his techniques. He collaborated with scientists from all over the world; many came from Switzerland to study with him; he also spent time there and in South Africa. No matter how busy, he always was able to find the time to help a friend or colleague with a problem and to pass on his knowledge to others.

Outside of work, he enjoyed gardening, carpentry, fly fishing and fly tying and birding. For nearly 30 years, he participated in the Central Suffolk Christmas bird count, covering much of Brookhaven hamlet including his own well-stocked feeders.

Some of my earliest memories were of my parents watching birds. Initially, I couldn't understand why anybody would want to do that, but by about age 8, I was avidly birding myself. He helped me with this and every other interest I ever had, always a source of knowledge and encouragement. At about age 11, I developed a nature museum in our basement; later he would help me with the Boy Scouts Bird Study Merit Badge. Even recently, we still worked together on the Christmas Count, the same sector he did when I was a young boy. He was my best friend as well as my father; I miss him terribly, but I also thank him for making me what I am today, and will cherish that and his memory forever.

An avid reader and dedicated conservationist, he would appreciate that donations be made in his name to the Brookhaven Free Library, Beaver Dam Road, Brookhaven, NY 11719, or the Post-Morrow Foundation (a local land-conservancy group), PO Box # 204, Brookhaven, NY 11719.

*- Scott Stoner*



## **UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

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

Wednesday, Sept. 3 Hawks and Hawk-Watching. Veteran educator Bob Budliger will take us through the basics of hawk identification and hawk-watching strategies. Then, Bob Kirker, coordinator of the Helderberg Hawk Watch, will summarize the successes of last season and plans for Fall '97.

Wednesday, Sept. 10 Identification of fall warblers. In an encore performance of his popular workshop from last fall's Federation meeting, local expert Walter Ellison will attempt to take the confusion out of this often frustrating task. Join us to prepare for this fall's migration!

Monday, Oct. 6 Baxter State Park and the Gannets of Bonaventure. Back by popular demand, free-lance naturalist John Green of Massachusetts will present a double feature of integrated slide/music presentations that are sure to both educate and delight us. "Aquarius" highlights Maine's Baxter State Park as well as starts and water. "Gannets of Bonaventure" explores the breeding behavior of this species on Bonaventure Island of southern Quebec, along with the many moods of Perce Rock. John is a Director of Massachusetts Audubon, a tour leader, and has presented programs from Canada to Florida.

Monday, Nov. 3 The Restoration, Management and Biology of the Wild Turkey in New York State. Karl Parker, DEC wildlife biologist will discuss this topic and include other interesting items, facts and updates relating to birds, wildlife observation, and NYSDEC's Bureau of Wildlife. Karl was born and raised in NY's Shawangunk Valley. He received his B.A. in biology from Wittenberg Univ., Springfield, NY; M.S. in Wildlife Management from SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry. His Master's thesis discussed common loons on acidified lakes in the Adirondacks. Since 1990 he has worked as a wildlife biologist in DEC Region 4 Schenectady office.

Monday, Dec 1 Christmas Party and program (tentative) on Brazil with HMBC members and frequent travelers Dale and Lillian Samuelson. Bring some food to share and enjoy another fine program by the Samuelsons.

Monday, Jan 5 Bill Gorman of HMBC, movies on birding Texas.

Monday, Feb 2 Peter Nye of NYSDEC on eagles in New York State.

Monday, Mar 2 Gregg Recer of HMBC on California and Utah.

Wednesday, Apr 22, location and time: TBA, HMBC Annual meeting and Clay and Patricia Sutton on "How to Spot Hawks and Owls"

Monday, May 5 Mike Storey, Adirondack Park Agency, on the Adirondacks.



## Upcoming HMBC Field Trips

*(Consult your field trip schedule or Birdline (439-8080) for trip details)*

### **Peebles Island State Park**

Sun. Aug 17

Coord: Gary Goodness 272-5830

This morning trip will search for passerine migrants on Peebles Island and scan for shorebirds along the Mohawk.

### **Vischer Ferry Preserve**

Wed.. Aug 20

Coord: Scott Stoner 464-0492

This is an evening walk planned from 6PM until dusk. Migrant shorebirds, herons, egrets and rails should be the highlights on this trip.

### **Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge**

Sun. Aug 24

Coord: Walter Ellison 456-6224 (h), 442-4320 (w)

Migrating shorebirds and most of the NYS herons and egrets are the focus of this long day trip to the NYC area. Prior to the trip, anyone attending should call the coordinator.

### **Huyck Preserve/Myosotis Lake**

Sat. Sep 6

Coord: Walter Ellison 456-6224 (h), 442-4320 (w)

Explore the sanctuary and research station for fall migrants and resident species. The preserve contains good habitat for warblers, vireos, flycatchers. If the water level is low, we can expect good shorebirds at the lake.

### **Mohawk River Cruise**

Sun. Sep 7

Coord: Denise Hilton 785-6760

Birding Guide: Bob Budliger

Reservations: Aug 1

A variation of the successful trip at last year's Federation meeting. Cruise the Mohawk and eat pizza as we view the waders, shorebirds and other river-friendly birds.

### **Peebles Island State Park**

Wed. Sep 10

Coord: Gary Goodness 272-5830

A walk around the island should produce many fall migrants including chances for Philadelphia Vireo and Connecticut Warbler as well as other warblers and shorebirds.

### **Hawk Watch**

Sat or Sun. Sep 13 or 14

Coord: Arthur Long 758-9283

This will be the peak time for Broad-winged Hawks. Last year had a record-breaking day with over 800 hawks. The actual date will be announced on Birdline based on weather forecasts.

### **Ann Lee Pond**

Wed. Sep 17

Coord: Gerry Colborn 272-1544

Timed to be right for the peak of fall warbler migration. Spend the evening in search of Blackpoll and Magnolia Warblers as well as other expected migrants.

### **Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve**

Sat. Sep 20

Coord: Bernie Grossman 399-9159

Marsh birds and fall migrants should highlight the trip list during this morning walk. Shorebirds are a possibility depending on water levels.

### **Pharaoh Lake**

Sun. Sep 28

Coord: Jackie Bogardus 283-6603

Enjoy an easy hike through wilderness areas in the southern Adirondacks. Expect beautiful fall colors as well as interesting birding. Bring a lunch and plan to spend until mid-afternoon.



## Vischer Ferry

Sun. Oct 5

Coord: Barbara Putnam 792-7542

Late warblers and vireos as well as shorebirds and ducks depending on the water level.

## Edmund Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (a.k.a. Brigantine)

Sat.-Mon. Oct 11-13

Coord: Walt Sabin 439-7344

Reservations: Oct. 1

Spend Columbus Day weekend to this popular NWR. At least part of one day will be spent at Avalon Seawatch. Expect an interesting species list from the height of fall migration.

### Update about Carter Pond Directions

There is NO sign for Rt 338 on Rt 29. Rt 338 is also called Rt 49 and the sign is for Rt 49.

### Mis-Printed HMBC Directories

A few of the new HMBC membership directories were mis-cut or had ink bleed through the pages. We attempted to catch all of the misprints before they went out, but a few apparently got through. If your directory was damaged, please call Gregg Recer, 899-2678 for a replacement.

### Erratum

In the April, 1997 issue of *Feathers*, the DEC contact to report neck-banded geese was mistakenly listed as Sal Kazalano. The correct name is Sal Cozzolino — the number given was correct: 783-3918.

### Decal Dilemma

Everyone should have received an HMBC static-cling window decal with their April, 1997 issue of *Feathers*. We hope everyone found them very attractive. However, it has been brought to our attention that the decals in some mailings had become stuck to one of the printed pages in the mailing resulting in ink from the printed matter defacing the decal. The Club will happily replace anyone's decal which was damaged in this manner. If you would like a replacement, please send a note with your name and address to:

Gregg Recer  
23 Scotch Mist Way  
Malta, NY 12020

Thanks for your understanding.

Also, additional decals will be available for sale at the monthly Club program meetings for a cost of \$1.50/ea. while supplies last.



## Field Trip Reports

### **Nott Road Park** 18 May 1997

Thirteen HMBC members plus leader Walter Ellison gathered just inside the gate at Nott Road Park at 7:00 AM on this Sunday. It was a very pleasant spring morning, a bit chilly to start, but sunny and just a little breezy. The birds proved as pleasant as the weather with 58 species including five woodpeckers and nine warblers. We followed a route that took us to the entrance road and thence along the north fence of the Guilderland wastewater treatment facility eventually reaching the Normans Kill whereupon we turned south into the majestic floodplain forest. We returned to our cars via the east side of the Park's athletic fields. Highlights included nest building **YELLOW-THROATED VIREO**, a briefly seen hunting male **COOPER'S HAWK**, **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER** and **WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH** feeding nestlings (the latter in a nest box), a singing **WINTER WREN**, 40 "MYRTLE" **WARBLERS**, and splendid views of **PILEATED WOODPECKER**, **LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH**, **BALTIMORE ORIOLE**, and **SCARLET Tanager**.

2 **CANADA GEESE**, 6 **WOOD DUCKS**, 1 **MALLARD**, 1 **COOPER'S HAWK**, 1 **RED-TAILED HAWK**, 2 **KILLDEER**, 4 **SPOTTED SANDPIPERS**, 1 **ROCK DOVE**, 4 **MOURNING DOVES**, 1 **BELTED KINGFISHER**, 2 **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS**, 7 **DOWNY WOODPECKERS**, 1 **HAIRY WOODPECKER**, 3 **NORTHERN FLICKERS**, 2 **PILEATED WOODPECKERS**, 2 **LEAST FLYCATCHERS**, 1 **GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER**, 1 **EASTERN KINGBIRD**, 4 **TREE SWALLOWS**, 2 **BANK SWALLOWS**, 3 **BARN SWALLOWS**, 3 **BLUE JAYS**, 4 **AMERICAN CROWS**, 8 **BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES**, 5 **TUFTED TITMICE**, 3 **WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES**, 2 **BROWN CREEPERS**, 1 **WINTER WREN**, 3 **BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS**, 4 **VEERIES**, 1 **WOOD THRUSH**, 15 **AMERICAN ROBINS**, 5 **GRAY CATBIRDS**, 20 **EUROPEAN STAR-**

**LINGS**, 3 **YELLOW-THROATED VIREOS**, 3 **WARBLING VIREOS**, 2 **RED-EYED VIREOS**, 6 **YELLOW WARBLERS**, 2 **CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLERS**, 1 **MAGNOLIA WARBLER**, 40 **YELLOW-RUMPED (MYRTLE) WARBLERS**, 2 **BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS**, 1 **PRAIRIE WARBLER**, 4 **AMERICAN REDSTARTS**, 4 **LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSHES**, 5 **COMMON YELLOWTHROATS**, 3 **SCARLET TANAGERS**, 4 **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAKS**, 3 **CHIPPING SPARROWS**, 8 **SONG SPARROWS**, 2 **BOBOLINKS**, 14 **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS**, 4 **COMMON GRACKLES**, 15 **BALTIMORE ORIOLES**, 12 **HOUSE FINCHES**, 12 **AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES**, 2 **HOUSE SPARROWS**.

*- Walter G. Ellison*

### **Saratoga Battlefield** July 20, 1997

Nine birders assembled at the Saratoga Battlefield on a beautiful, cool (70 degrees F) day with light breezes, and enjoyed excellent views of most of the 34 species we saw. Highlights included aerial displays and tree posing from **AMERICAN KESTREL**, darting **RED-EYED VIREOS**, **BLUE-WINGED WARBLERS** and a vivid **INDIGO BUNTING** at the start. A forest ranger gave us a short explanation of the historical significance of the battlefield.

*- Ann B'Rello*

### **Fostering Alliances** **Hosting the Battenkill Conservancy**

A dozen members of the Battenkill Conservancy defied the portent of rain and chill to join me in observing spring migrants along the Hudson at Fort Miller.

We sighted and identified 15 species of waterfowl. Binocular views were augmented with



spotting scopes, which magnified the rich variety of breeding plumages. The following species were identified:

**BLACK DUCK, GADWALL, MALLARD, COMMON PINTAIL, NORTHERN SHOVELER, CANVASBACK, RINGNECKED DUCK, LESSER SCAUP, COMMON GOLDENEYE, BUFFLEHEAD, COMMON MERGANSER, HOODED MERGANSER, COMMON LOON, CANADA GOOSE.**

We ended the morning watch at noon and drove in a small cavalcade south along River Road from which the **HOODED MERGANSERS** and **BUFFLEHEAD** were seen. Just as we were completing our short tour, three **COMMON LOONS** took flight. The first I'd ever seen on the Hudson in the area.

What a morning!

*-Jim Sotis*

## **Instructional Trip to Five Rivers June 7, 1997**

The June 7th 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, however, only two birders showed up for this scintillating walk. So, with a 1:1 leader to participant ratio, we set off.

Summer 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: **RED-EYED VIREO, BOBOLINK, EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE, YELLOW WARBLER, and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT.** The leaders pointed out to the group a few nests (which we had staked-out in the weeks before the walk!)

including: **AMERICAN ROBIN** and **WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH.** On the walk, however, we spotted an **EASTERN KINGBIRD**, a **BALTIMORE ORIOLE**, and an **EASTERN PHOEBE** building nests. Those were a real treat! The **EASTERN PHOEBE's** nest was in a small cavity along a washed-out section of the Vlomankill. This reminded the participants of a time before porches and eaves, when birds had to nest where suitable habitat was available, not where their habitat is simply a by-product of humankind's (de)construction.

The other aspect of our trip was to attempt 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, and HOUSE FINCH,** to name a few. We also spotted female **WOOD DUCK** and **MALLARD** with young, downy chicks in-tow.

Highlights of the trip included: a great view of a singing **WILLOW FLYCATCHER** and the discovery of a calling **EASTERN MEADOWLARK** (a life "call" for even the leaders). The walk concluded with a stop in the Education Center to check out the always productive feeders and to compile a trip-list. Our total list for that morning reached 46 species.

Other birds seen/heard but not mentioned above...

**CANADA GOOSE, ROCK DOVE, MOURNING DOVE, BELTED KINGFISHER, DOWNY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, TREE SWALLOW, BARN SWALLOW, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, BROWN CREEPER, HOUSE WREN, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, GRAY CATBIRD, CEDAR**

**continued on page 48...**



## 1996 Troy Christmas Bird Count Results

The 1996 Troy Christmas Bird Count was a great success! Some of the highlights include the addition of a new species, a Common Yellowthroat, which is the 136th species seen on this count since its inception. Also, there were 5 record highs for number of individuals (Great Blue Heron, Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Flicker, and Pileated Woodpecker) and nine second highest individuals (some were ties with previous years). Sixteen species were seen by all 7 full-time parties, but twenty species were seen by only a single party (five of those were seen only on the count week), so we still have some work to do next year. The total of 72 species seen, including the five "count week" birds, is the second highest species total, after last year's record 73 species. Not a bad count!

Group A: Bill Gorman, Mike Kuhrt, Cliff Lamere. 6:00 AM - 3:45 PM (3 hours, 1 mile on foot; 5.75 hours, 60 miles by car. Also 1 hour, 1 mile owling)

Group B: Larry Alden, Jeff Marx, Norton Miller, Jim Mullaney, Marian Zimmerman. 6:45 - 7:00 AM & 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM (2.5 hours, 3 miles on foot, 7 hours, 92 miles by car, also .75 hours, 3 miles owling)

Group C: Rich Guthrie, Peter Feiberg, Mark Wolf. 5:15 AM - 6:00 PM (2 hours, 2 miles on foot; 8.25 hours, 60 miles by car. Also 2.5 hours, 10 miles owling).

Group D: Ken Able, Walter Ellison. 6:40 AM - 4:40 PM (5 hours, 4 miles on foot; 5 hours, 38 miles by car).

Group E: Bill Lee, Tom Palmer, Matthew Young. 6:30 AM - 5:00 PM (2 hours, 2.5 miles on foot; 7.5 hours, 67 miles by car. Also 1 hour, .5 miles owling).

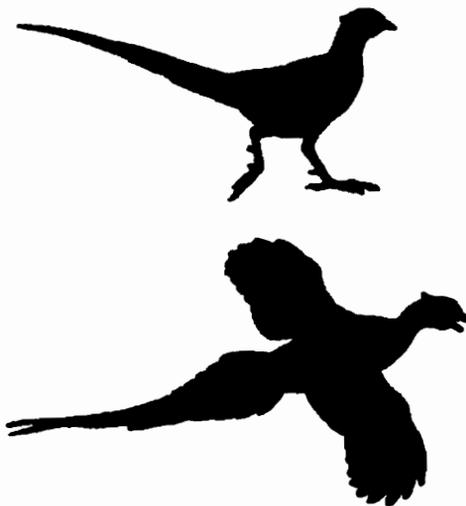
Group F: Jane Graves, Alson VanKeuren. 7:00 AM - 2:30 PM (.75 hours, 1 mile by foot; 6.75 hours, 68 miles by car).

Group G: Walt Sabin, Gil Banner. 7:00 AM - 3:30 PM (8.5 hours, 67 miles by car).

Group G1: Scott Stoner, Denise Hilton. 1:00 - 4:30 PM (3.5 hours, 4 miles by foot).

Feeder F1: Paula Auclair. 3 hours.

Feeder F2: Dorothy McChesney. 2 hours.





# Feathers

Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	G1	F1	F2	Total	Comment
Common Loon	1										1	7th occ.
Great Blue Heron	1	2		1			9	1			14	New high
Snow Goose	1		3								4	9th occ.
Canada Goose	1900	403	3250	210	837	111	600				7311	
American Black Duck	6	6	255	50	46						363	
Mallard	5	87	1170	270	52	94			2		1680	2nd high
Northern Pintail			4								4	2nd high
Gadwall			1								1	10th occ.
Canvasback			1								1	
Common Goldeneye		3	45	4	14						66	
Bufflehead				2	2						4	2nd high
Hooded Merganser			3		1						4	
Common Merganser	34	29	17	63	47	33					223	
Bald Eagle *	2		3								5	2nd high
Northern Harrier		1									1	
Sharp-shinned Hawk				3		1	1				5	3rd high
Cooper's Hawk		1		2							3	
Northern Goshawk			1								1	
Red-shouldered Hawk			CW								CW	
Red-tailed Hawk	10	19	16	28	12	9	12			1	107	2nd high
Rough-legged Hawk	1										1	
American Kestrel					1						1	
Ring-necked Pheasant		1									1	
Ruffed Grouse	1	4	1								6	
Wild Turkey			CW				CW				CW	6th occ.
Ring-billed Gull	4	12	53	175	7	9			2		262	3rd high
Herring Gull		1	18	2000	129		116				2264	
Thayer's Gull			CW								CW	
Iceland Gull				1	1						2	
Lesser Black-backed Gull				1							1	
Glaucous Gull			CW								CW	
Great Black-backed Gull	4	3	3	250	32		13		1		306	
Rock Dove	120	82	250	400	176	225	149				1402	

# Feathers



Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	G1	F1	F2	Total	Comment
Mourning Dove	118	194	310	133	61	83	72		4	4	979	New high
Eastern Screech-Owl	2		1			1					4	3rd high
Great Horned Owl	2	2	2	1	1						8	2nd high
Belted Kingfisher	1		2		1						4	
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1	1	1	1					1		5	New high
Downy Woodpecker	8	21	19	20	14	15	2	4	2	2	107	
Hairy Woodpecker	4	4	5	6	4	2			1	2	28	
Northern Flicker	1	7	4	7	2	1					22	New high
Pileated Woodpecker	2	4	2		1						9	New high
Horned Lark	50										50	
Blue Jay	61	52	54	32	28	42	40	3	5	3	320	
American Crow	104	1225	750	535	83	306	51	5		125	3184	2nd high
Fish Crow		4		1	3	1					9	3rd high
Common Raven	1										1	4th occ.
Black-capped Chickadee	24	119	72	96	76	83	21	25	4	6	526	
Tufted Titmouse	3	8	16	27	12	6		3		5	80	
Red-breasted Nuthatch	3	2	2								7	
White-breasted Nuthatch	7	14	17	17	7	7	1	3	1	2	76	
Brown Creeper	3	1	3	4	1						12	3rd high
Golden-crowned Kinglet	2	7			6						15	2nd high
Eastern Bluebird	5	3	2				7				17	
American Robin	21	23		1		1					46	
Northern Mockingbird		1		4	2		2				9	
Cedar Waxwing		25		16			2	30			73	
European Starling	268	962	225	5520	339	2372	250		2	2	9940	2nd high
Yellow-rumped Warbler		1									1	4th occ.
Common Yellowthroat				1								1st occ. (!)
Northern Cardinal	3	14	5	19	9	10	10				70	
American Tree Sparrow	16	15	26	43	32	20	8	5		6	171	
Song Sparrow	1	9	11	14	6	2	2				45	5th high
White-throated Sparrow		5	4	1	11						21	
Dark-eyed Junco	33	10	100	52	50	5				6	256	4th high



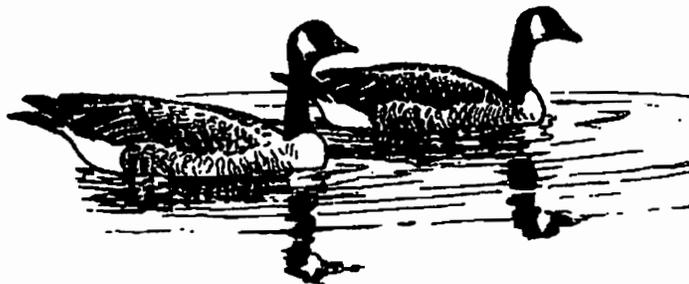
# Feathers

Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	G1	F1	F2	Total	Comment
Red-winged Blackbird			1								1	
Rusty Blackbird			CW								CW	3rd occ.
Brown-headed Cowbird			3								3	
Purple Finch	3		3								6	
House Finch	56	44	72	58	24	3	18		6	4	285	
American Goldfinch	32	10	26	12	31	15	3	3	8	4	144	7th high
House Sparrow	20	61	41	150	27	20	21		3		343	
<b>Total Birds</b>	<b>2944</b>	<b>3502</b>	<b>6873</b>	<b>1023</b>	<b>2188</b>	<b>3477</b>	<b>1410</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>3092</b>	
				1							1	
<b>Total Species</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>47+5</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>27+1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>67+5</b>	<b>2nd high</b>

... continued from page 47

WAXWING, EUROPEAN STARLING, BLUE-WINGED WARBLER, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, AMERICAN REDSTART, LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH, NORTHERN CARDINAL, CHIPPING SPARROW, SONG SPARROW, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, HOUSE SPARROW.

- Carole Flood and Jeff Marx



# Feathers



## 1995 So. Rensselaer Co. CBC

Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total Field	Total Feeders	Grand Total
Great Blue Heron		1							1		1
Canada Goose	2		7	15				31	55		55
American Black Duck	33	4	19	8		20		15	99		99
Mallard	828	62	58	16	4	19		30	1017		1017
Northern Pintail	1								1		1
Gadwall								1	1		1
Common Merganser	15		4	2					21		21
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	1		1				1	4		4
Cooper's Hawk				1			1	1	3		3
Northern Goshawk	1								1		1
Red-tailed Hawk	18	5	8	16	8		2	4	61	3	64
Rough-legged Hawk		1		1					2		2
American Kestrel				1		1			2		2
Ring-necked Pheasant					2			1	3		3
Ruffed Grouse				2			1		3		3
Wild Turkey	5	4	41	4		17		55	125		125
Ring-billed Gull	2		11	21					34		34
Herring Gull	20		2	4					26		26
Great Black-backed Gull	14		5	11					30		30
Rock Dove	162	88	130	335	25	33	40	40	853		853
Mourning Dove	25	33	84	115	60	36	41	27	421	48	469
Eastern Screech Owl				1					1		1
Great Horned Owl			1	1					2		2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1								1		1
Downy Woodpecker	7	3	8	14	10	8	4	8	62	8	70
Hairy Woodpecker	4		3	2	1	2	2	3	17	2	19
Northern Flicker			3	1	1				5		5
Pileated Woodpecker	1			2			1	1	5	1	6
Horned Lark			150		300			35	485		485
Blue Jay	30	19	38	28	7	11	36	49	218	25	243
American Crow	29	47	218	84	55	19	46	306	804	121	925
Fish Crow	1								1		1



# Feathers

Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total Field	Total Feeders	Grand Total
Common Raven	1				6	4			11		11
Black-capped Chickadee	50	59	58	72	40	84	177	143	683	45	728
Tufted Titmouse	12	9	13	9	5	2	2	7	59	12	71
Red-breasted Nuthatch	2		3	1		1		1	8	1	9
White-breasted Nuthatch	14	2	6	8	7	6	8	4	55	4	59
Brown Creeper	1		1			1	1		4		4
Golden-crowned Kinglet			2	1	3	2			8		8
Eastern Bluebird		4	12		3			18	37		37
American Robin	2	12	1	54					69		69
Gray Catbird	1								1		1
Northern Mockingbird		2	291						14		14
Cedar Waxwing	10		17						27		27
Northern Shrike			1		1		3	1	6		6
European Starling	260	96	70	7000	375	6	54	103	7964	8	7972
Northern Cardinal	17	1	19	11	5		9	24	86	17	103
American Tree Sparrow	11	19	52	16	20	12	38	67	235	15	250
Song Sparrow	13	6	2				3	1	25		25
Swamp Sparrow	1								1		1
White-throated Sparrow	11							3	14		14
Dark-eyed Junco	23		23	26	20	5	33	46	176	16	192
Snow Bunting			90		10			110	210		210
House Finch	22	120	25	73	83	20	2	75	420	40	460
American Goldfinch	5	5	18	18	17		1	4	68	11	79
Evening Grosbeak					33			15	48		48
House Sparrow	22	105	57	135	25	85	61	163	653	25	678
Great Gray Owl					1				1		1
Say's Phoebe	1								1		1
<b>Total Birds</b>	<b>1679</b>	<b>708</b>	<b>1261</b>	<b>8119</b>	<b>1128</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>566</b>	<b>1393</b>	<b>15248</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>15650</b>
<b>Total Species</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>59</b>

# Feathers



## 1996 So. Rensselaer Co. CBC

Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total Field	Total Feeders	Grand Total
Great Blue Heron	1			1				1	3		3
Canada Goose		78		29		60	350	136	653		653
Wood Duck	2							1	3		3
American Black Duck	2	8		4		14	20	3	51		51
Mallard	76	143	2	46	30	42	200	45	584		584
Common Merganser					3	1		15	19		19
Scoter (sp)						1			1		1
Cooper's Hawk		1			1			1	3		3
Red-tailed Hawk	5	6	4	16	5	6	7	9	58		58
American Kestrel				1					1		1
Peregrine Falcon	1		1					1	3		3
Ruffed Grouse		1	1		1				3		3
Wild Turkey	70	16	8	20					114		114
Ring-billed Gull	10	51		48	1	2	14	25	151		151
Herring Gull		2		2				11	15		15
Great Black-backed Gull	1	1		12		1		4	19		19
Rock Dove	30	141	37	250	20	32	8	219	737		737
Mourning Dove	5	14	13	45	10	4	5	45	141	6	147
Eastern Screech Owl		1		1					2		2
Belted Kingfisher							1	1	2		2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	3	1	2	1					7		7
Downy Woodpecker	7	6	8	12	1	6	6	1	47	3	50
Hairy Woodpecker	5	1		2			3	1	12	1	13
Northern Flicker		1		1				1	3		3
Eastern Phoebe	1								1		1
Blue Jay	10	14	15	36	15	44	46	29	209	3	212
American Crow	15	900	44	190	900	61	27	383	2520	6	2526
Black-capped Chickadee	73	75	49	24	50	143	66	13	493	26	519
Tufted Titmouse	12	5	6	10	10	4	2	1	50	3	53
Red-breasted Nuthatch		2				6			8	3	11
White-breasted Nuthatch	12	3	1	6	1	10	10		43	2	45



# Feathers

Species	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total Field	Total Feeders	Grand Total
Brown Creeper		3		1		1	1		6		6
Golden-crowned Kinglet	1		1		1	2	8		13	1	14
Eastern Bluebird		3		3		4	7		17		17
American Robin		5		100		91	167	40	403		403
Northern Mockingbird				1			1	1	3		3
Cedar Waxwing	25		54			28			107		107
European Starling	180	649	155	2500	250	310	476	645	5165		5165
Northern Cardinal	4	5		6		1	1	3	20	2	22
American Tree Sparrow	3	15	10			3	11	3	45		45
Field Sparrow				1					1		1
Song Sparrow	8	4					2	5	19		19
Swamp Sparrow							1		1		1
White-throated Sparrow		12		2					14		14
White-crowned Sparrow	1								1		1
Dark-eyed Junco		40	7	45	20	29	63	5	209	7	216
Red-winged Blackbird	125								125		125
Rusty Blackbird	1								1		1
Purple Finch					1				1		1
House Finch	10	14	2	35	10	6	26	4	107	2	109
<b>Total Birds</b>	<b>1248</b>	<b>2282</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>3495</b>	<b>1360</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>1554</b>	<b>1744</b>	<b>13086</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>13156</b>
<b>Total Species</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>52</b>

Groups:

	1995	1996
A	Guthrie	Guthrie
B	VanKeuren	Wolf/Murphy
C	Connor/Whitney	Whitney
D	Gorman	Gorman
E	Goodness	Goodness
F	Graves	Marx/Alden
G	Dunham	Dunham
H	Lee/Bogardus	Lee/Esch



## PROGRAM REPORTS

### Record Numbers Attend Loon Program

- Denise Hilton

On June 2, a record-breaking crowd of over 100 people gathered to listen to a program on Common Loons, given by Gary Lee, veteran forest ranger in the Adirondack Park. The program opened with a recording of various Loon calls, including the "laugh", the haunting long cry, with its long, single tone, descending to lower resonances at the end, and the hoot.

Gary's program continued with a detailed description of the "The Great Northern Diver", the Common Loon, which is capable of diving to depths of up to 255 feet, and can fly as fast as 70-75 mph once it gets airborne in its unique, water-run manner. The range of this bird includes most of the northern inland, area of the US in summer, and north to south coastal areas in winter. In New York State, the Adirondack region predominates.

The Loon is highly territorial, and a small lake will usually support only one nesting pair as they incubate in late May and early June. When nesting and raising chicks is completed, Loons are more sociable, often seen in flocks by fall. The Loon typically hatch two young, which leave their nest almost immediately. They are fed whole, small fish by their parents. The first-born often becomes familiar with the "hoot" call signaling feeding, and therefore is usually the better fed of the two chicks. If food is not abundant, as is the case on many Adirondack lakes, the second-born sometimes dies. A nesting Loon is very sensitive to disturbance of any kind, and will leave its nest if startled by passing boats or other intrusions, often leading to the failure of the nest due to predation. They will sometimes attempt a second nesting, but Gary described a pair on Lime Kiln Lake which has had only 3 successful nests in 10 years.

Gary's program continued with some good news about other avian species, such as the rising Adirondack population of Osprey, and the 25 successful nestings of Bald Eagles this year. The moose population is also rising, with 60 present in the State this year, and 100 predicted for next year. The attempted reintroduction of the lynx in the High Peaks was not so successful, however, with all of the cats migrating out of the State without any successful reproduction. The news on acid rain was also not good. Occasional liming of the lakes has brought the pH up to a point at which trout and other fish can live, but the cost is prohibitive.

A favorite subject of Gary's is flowers, particularly orchids, and Gary shared many beautiful slides of yellow and pink lady slippers, fairy lady slippers, white and magenta showy lady slippers and a variety of other beautiful orchids. Because of a serious poaching problem, Gary now refrains from sharing the locations of the most rare of these flowers.

Gary's program, with the haunting Loon calls, the beautiful slides, and his own reflections on Adirondack life based on over 30 years of living and working there, ended with a stunning slide display of 53 sunsets in 3 minutes. The program was one of the highlights of the season, and left Club members and guests looking forward to a new program season in the fall.

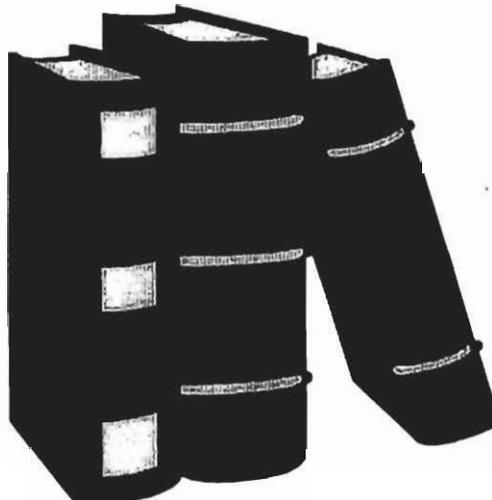


## **HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE AT FIVE RIVERS**

Long-time HMBC member Sam Madison has graciously donated his library of birding and ornithology periodicals to the Club for use and research by other Club members. The HMBC Board will determine the rules governing their use. The periodicals are to be stored at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center. The donations include:

- A nearly complete set of *Feathers*
- The *Kingbird* from 1962 through 1996
- 148 issues of the *Auk*, journal of the American Ornithologists' Union
- 16 issues of the National Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Census

We are very grateful to Sam for this generous contribution.





## CONSERVATION EDUCATION WORKSHOP IN ADIRONDACKS

- *Scott Stoner*

Denise Hilton and I, attended a week-long Conservation Education Workshop at Raquette Lake in the Adirondacks in mid-July. This workshop is sponsored by the NYS Conservation Council, a nonprofit organization representing sportsmen-conservationists, in cooperation with the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation. It was held at the SUNY College of Cortland's Outdoor Education Center and featured a variety of topics in natural history, interpretation and environmental problems.

Instructors for the week's session included DEC educators Frank Knight and Ray Perry, and Forest Ranger Gary Lee, Adirondack Park Agency's Mike Storey and freelance educator George Steele. Students, ranging in age from just out of college to senior citizens, included professional teachers, scout leaders and volunteers.

The week began with a general introduction to ecological principles, then focused on several Adirondack habitats including forest, lake, stream and bog. There were some lectures, including an encore performance of Gary Lee's slide show he gave to HMBC, but much of the work was outdoors. We studied aquatic plants, explored Ferd's Bog (no woodpeckers), observed loons with chicks at Moss Lake, and practiced tree and fern identification. One day we took a boat across the lake and explored Camp Pine Knot a.k.a. Camp Huntington, one of the true Adirondack "great camps" and learned the fascinating human history of the Durants and others. There, we had a lesson in firearms safety from Environmental Conservation Officer Doug Kerr and had the option of practicing with a .22 rifle.

Most of us did, and most even got at least one in the bull's eye.

The lodging was rustic cabins, but the food was excellent, and goals of losing weight were not achieved! However, educational goals were, and most people considered the workshop a most valuable way to spend a summer week. The weather was hot most of the time, storms several days in the late afternoon. On Tuesday, a violent storm struck during dinner, knocking out the power, bringing a wall of horizontal rain and wind down the lake and whipping up massive waves in a short time. There was limited free time during the week, but people found time to swim before or after meals, and to do a little independent study of the lake from time to time. Mostly, we were involved in the educational process, though, with something every evening. By the time the week came to an end with a George Steele campfire and story session (yes, he really does know Dr. Seuss' Lorax story by heart), we were tired and ready to go home, but full of good memories and new ideas to pass along to our students.

Note: Persons interested in attending this next year can contact Alan Mapes at DEC at 457-3720 for more info. Also, there really will be a boardwalk built at Ferd's Bog!



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23 Scotch Mist Way  
Ballston Spa, NY 12020

or via e-mail to:

recerg@crisny.org





*President's Corner: This is my first report as Club president, and I thank you all for the privilege of working with "one of the best birding clubs in the country" to quote the president emeritus! The sheer incredible output of work required to run an accurate (and funny!) BIRDLINE, put out a bimonthly Feathers, lead over 50 field trips a year, host monthly programs, and keep adding to club activities boggles the mind. But add to this the enthusiasm for birding that makes every field trip and club meeting a joy and you know you have a rare combination. New this summer: a new voice of Birdline - Jeff Marx, a new field trip chair - Joan Cipriani. Please support these and all your committee chairs when they ask for you help. It's your club. See ya.*

*- Ann B'Kells*

### Federation of New York State Bird Clubs

Reminder that the 50th Annual meeting will be held at Lake Placid, hosted by the High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc. on Sep. 12, 13, and 14, 1997. Registration forms can be found in the April issue of Feathers. If you need a form, contact Mike Peterson (518) 873-2052.

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## MORE PEOPLE, MISERABLE WEATHER FEATURE 1997 CENTURY RUN

by  
*Robert P. Yunick*

The Club's 52nd consecutive Guy Bartlett Century Run on May 17, 1997 was marred by miserable weather, but nevertheless drew ten field parties (most in 15 years) of 32 observers (most in 13 years) who collectively reported 169 species and one hybrid (ties seventh highest total). The best part total was 131 species and one hybrid, tying tenth highest behind 156 in 1986 and 155 plus a hybrid in 1989. Nine of the parties met or exceeded 100 species.

No new species were added, leaving the composite list at 252 species and two hybrids. This was the 13th year since 1964 (34 years total) that no new species were added. As for rarities, only three species were recorded for the tenth or less time: Gadwall and Northern Bobwhite each for the seventh time, and Peregrine Falcon for the eighth time.

Eighteen species and one hybrid had the distinction of being reported by only one party; and are noted by party in the group summary. The maximum number of singly reported species by one party was six and one hybrid.

There were 39 species reported by all parties, and another 23 by all but one party. That total of 62 species coincidentally matches the number of species that have been recorded without fail in every of the 52 Century Runs since 1946. Back in 1963 when the count was 18 years running, that list of old reliables stood at 66 species. In the intervening years, only four of those species have missed a year or more to be delisted from the old reliable

list. In that same interval from 1963 to date, the composite list has gone from 222 species to 252 species - adding 30 to the list.

Depending on one's location, air temperatures ranged from lows at or just above 40 degrees F, with windchills in the 30's; and highs struggling to reach 60 degrees F. It was but another cool, wet day in a generally cool and wet spring season. Most of the day was overcast, with intermittent showers; and variable wind from the east and south turning northwesterly by dusk. Observers offered comments such as "miserable weather", "lean pickings due to the cold", "no raptors in air all day" to an optimistic "rain enhances viewing at Saratoga Lake - perhaps keeping boats off".

### **IN THIS ISSUE...**

*Threats to Albatrosses*

*Birding Festivals in Cape May  
and the Rio Grande Valley*

*Upcoming Programs and Field  
Trips*

*1998 Field Trip Planning  
Underway*



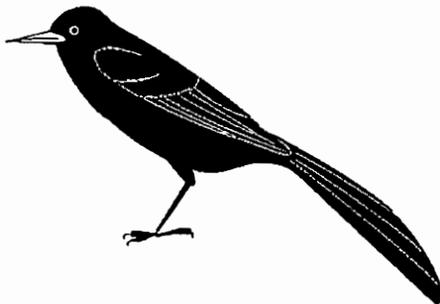
The day's birding commenced at 0205 and ran to 2130, almost 19 1/2 hours. Individual groups were afield from 14 1/2 to 19 1/3 hours.

All aspects considered, the 1997 Century Run could be characterized as lacking any outstanding records; but nevertheless ranking above average in terms of species recorded, resembling a sort of featureless statistical point buried in the database. The adverse weather, while drawing comments and complaints, did not seem to deter observers from participating, or from staying afield over 14 hours.

I extend my thanks to the participants for their valiant efforts and their reports.

## Group Summary:

Group A - R. Budliger\*, A. Mapes and J. Suozzo. 0400-2100. Black Creek Marsh, Thacher Park, Alcove-Basic Reservoirs, Stanton Pond, Coeymans, Cohoes, Albany airport, Ann Lee Pond, Pine Bush and Five Rivers.



119 species: Bald Eagle.

Group B - Barb Putnam\*. 0700-2130. Mostly Saratoga Co. including Tower Rd., Moreau

Lake Park, Wilton, Saratoga National Historic Park and Saratoga and Round Lakes; and in Washington Co. at Ft. Edward, and Denton Preserve. 110 species.



Group C - Ronald Calkins, Jocelyn Cole-Calkins\*, and Erin Willsey. 0415-2045. Gulf Hill, Stage and Picard Rds. in Albany Co., Black Creek Marsh, Thacher Park, Basic Creek Reservoir, Westerlo, Five Rivers and Cohoes Falls. 100 species.

Group D - W. Gorman\*, W. Lee and M. Kuhrt. 0330-2100. Black Creek Marsh, Basic and Alcove Reservoirs, and Saratoga Lake. 129 species: Least Bittern, Common Goldeneye, Peregrine Falcon, Tennessee Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler and Vesper Sparrow.

Group E - Lee\* and Lenny Thomas. 0500-2000. Mostly Guilderland and Colonie, and Vischer Ferry. 54 species.

Group F - N. Slack, S. Chisolm, H. Stebbins, A. Joachim, C. George\*, J. Rose, L. Saltzman, G. Shaw and T. Engel. 0430-2030. Albany, Schenectady and Saratoga counties. 108 species: Northern Bobwhite.



## ALBATROSS MORTALITY FROM LONGLINING

Group G - Ray Perry\*. 0205-2125. All within Schenectady Co. 102 species: Caroline Wren.

Group H - Larry Alden, Jackie Bogardus, Steve Chorvas, Carole Flood, Jeff Marx and Frank Murphy\*. 0400-2100. All within Saratoga Co. 125 species: Broad-winged Hawk.

Group I - Walter G. Ellison\* and Nancy L. Martin with Ian M. Ellison. 0340-2000. Albany, SUNYA, Pine Bush, Meadowdale, Black Creek Marsh, Rilyea and Gran Hill Roads, Fairwood Apts., Thacher Park, Cole Hill State Forest, Basic Creek Reservoir, Simmons Island, Vischer Ferry, Saratoga Lake, Saratoga Battlefield and Wright's Loop. 131 species and one hybrid: Hooded Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Golden-winged Warbler, Brewster's Warbler and Rusty Blackbird.

Group J - Jane Graves\* and Alison Van Keuren. 0400-1830. Cold Spring Rd., Round Lake, Vischer Ferry, Saratoga National Historic Park, Saratoga sod farm (Wright's Loop), Saratoga Lake, Skidmore College, Tower Rd. and Fox Hill Rd - Lake Desolation. 110 species: Barred Owl and Palm Warbler.

\* - indicates group compiler.

There are fourteen species of albatrosses in the world. Three live in the North Pacific, one in the Galapagos and the rest in the southern oceans. Individuals of twelve of the fourteen species have been caught on longline hooks. Other tubenose birds, eg shearwaters and petrels are also caught.

Albatrosses have evolved a lifestyle that includes long life (40-60 years), late sexual maturation (5-10 years), a single egg each nesting season and nesting frequency of 1-3 years. These characteristics mean that losses are not easily made up. Two species of albatrosses are among the rarest of seabirds making them particularly susceptible; the Amsterdam albatross is the rarest with 9 breeding pairs and the short-tailed albatross has only 123 breeding pairs and lives on an island with an active volcano.

Longlining is a fishing method which puts millions of hooks in the open ocean. These hooks are baited and attract seabirds as the bait floats on the ocean's surface before sinking hundreds of feet below the surface.

There are a number of modifications to the fishing practice which would significantly reduce the threat to birds and increase the efficiency of the fisherman. Trailing streamers above the sinking baits scares the birds away. Using thawed bait insures a faster sinking time. Using bait throwers reduces the time that bait spends on the surface. Setting lines at night avoids killing day time feeding albatrosses. Ultimately, a ship designed to put the baits directly beneath the hull could largely eliminate the problem.

Ask your congressional representative and senators to insure the State Department continues to make this issue one of its highest priorities.

# Feathers

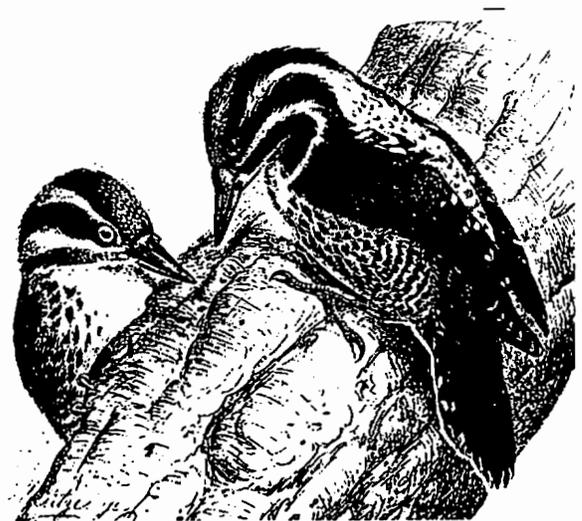


Common Loon	a b c d f h i j	American Woodcock	a b c d f h i
Pied-billed Grebe	a d i	Bonaparte's Gull	b d f h i j
Horned Grebe	a f	Ring-billed Gull	a b c d e f g h i j
Double-crested Cormorant	a b c d f g h i j	Herring Gull	a b d f i
American Bittern	a c d e f h i j	Great Black-backed Gull	a c d f g h i
Least Bittern	d	Common Tern	d f h i
Great Blue Heron	a b c d f g h i j	Black Tern	d f h i
Green Heron	a b c f g i j	Rock Dove	a b c d e f g h i j
Canada Goose	a b c d e f g h i j	Mourning Dove	a b c d e f g h i j
Wood Duck	a b c d f g h i j	Black-billed Cuckoo	a f
Green-winged Teal	h j	Eastern Screech-Owl	d i
American Black Duck	a b c d f g h i j	Great Horned Owl	d g
Mallard	a b c d e f g h i j	Barred Owl	j
Blue-winged Teal	a b d f h i	Whip-poor-will	h j
Gadwall	b d h	Chimney Swift	a b c d f g h i j
Ring-necked Duck	a d f i	Ruby-throated Hummingbird	a b c d g h i j
Common Goldeneye	d	Belted Kingfisher	a b c d g h j
Bufflehead	a d f i	Red-bellied Woodpecker	b c g i
Hooded Merganser	i	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	a b c d e f g h i j
Common Merganser	a b h j	Downy Woodpecker	a b c d e f g h i j
Red-breasted Merganser	i	Hairy Woodpecker	a b c d f g h i j
Turkey Vulture	a b c d e f g h i	Northern Flicker	a b c d e f g h i j
Osprey	b c f g	Pileated Woodpecker	b c d f g h i j
Bald Eagle	a	Eastern Wood Pewee	c e
Northern Harrier	a b g	Willow Flycatcher	c d
Sharp-shinned Hawk	i	Least Flycatcher	a b c d f h j
Cooper's Hawk	i	Eastern Phoebe	a b c d f g h i j
Broad-winged Hawk	h	Great Crested Flycatcher	a b c d e f g h i j
Red-tailed Hawk	a b c d e f g h i j	Eastern Kingbird	a b c d e f g h i j
American Kestrel	b d g h i j	Horned Lark	a f g h
Peregrine Falcon	d	Purple Martin	b d f h i j
Ruffed Grouse	a b c d j j	Tree Swallow	a b c d e f g h i j
Wild Turkey	a b c e f g i	No. Rough-winged Swallow	a b c d f g h i j
Northern Bobwhite	f	Bank Swallow	a b d e f g h i j
Virginia Rail	a b c d g h i j	Cliff Swallow	a b c d g i
Sora	a d f h i	Barn Swallow	a b c d e f g h i j
Common Moorhen	d e f h i j	Blue Jay	a b c d e f g h i j
Semipalmated Plover	d f h i j	American Crow	a b c d e f g h i j
Killdeer	a b c d e f g h i j	Fish Crow	d g
Greater Yellowlegs	a b d f h i	Common Raven	a b c d h i j
Lesser Yellowlegs	b d f h i j	Black-capped Chickadee	a b c d e f g h i j
Solitary Sandpiper	a b c d f g h i j	Tufted Titmouse	a b c d e f g h i j
Spotted Sandpiper	a b c d f g h i j	Red-breasted Nuthatch	b c d g h i j
Upland Sandpiper	b g	White-breasted Nuthatch	a b c d f g h i j
Semipalmated Sandpiper	d e h j	Brown Creeper	a c d e f g h i j
Least Sandpiper	a b d f h i j	Carolina Wren	g
Pectoral Sandpiper	d f h i	House Wren	a b c d e f g h i j
Common Snipe	a c d i j	Winter Wren	a c f g i



# Feathers

Marsh Wren	a b c d f h i j	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	a b c d f g h i
Golden-crowned Kinglet	b h i	Indigo Bunting	g h i j
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	a b c d f g h i j	Eastern Towhee	a b c d e f g h i j
Eastern Bluebird	a b c d e f g h i	Chipping Sparrow	a b c d e f g h i j
Veery	a b c d e f g h i j	Field Sparrow	a c d g h i j
Swainson's Thrush	d g	Vesper Sparrow	d
Hermit Thrush	a b c d e f g h i j	Savannah Sparrow	a b d g h i j
Wood Thrush	a b c d e f g h i j	Henslow's Sparrow	b d j
American Robin	a b c d e f g h i j	Song Sparrow	a b c d e f g h i j
Gray Catbird	a b c d e f g h i j	Swamp Sparrow	a b c d e f g h i j
Northern Mockingbird	a c d e h i j	White-throated Sparrow	b c d f g h i j
Brown Thrasher	a b c d e f g i	White-crowned Sparrow	a g h i
Water Pipit	a f	Dark-eyed Junco	a b c d e f h i
Cedar Waxwing	a j	Bobolink	a b c d e f g h i j
European Starling	a b c d e f g h i j	Red-winged Blackbird	a b c d e f g h i j
Solitary Vireo	a b c d f h i j	Eastern Meadowlark	a b c d f g h i j
Yellow-throated Vireo	a c d g h i j	Rusty Blackbird	i
Warbling Vireo	a b c d f g h i j	Common Grackle	a b c d e f g h i j
Red-eyed Vireo	a b d f h i j	Brown-headed Cowbird	a b c d e f g h i j
Blue-winged Warbler	a b c d f g h i j	Baltimore Oriole	a b c d e f g h i j
Golden-winged Warbler	i	Purple Finch	a d h i j
(Brewster's Warbler)*	i	House Finch	a b c d f g h i j
Tennessee Warbler	d	Pine Siskin	b h j
Nashville Warbler	a b d f g h	American Goldfinch	a b c d e f g h i j
Northern Parula	a b d f g h i j	Evening Grosbeak	b h
Yellow Warbler	a b c d e f g h i j	House Sparrow	a b c d e f g h i j
Chestnut-sided Warbler	a b c d f g h i j		
Magnolia Warbler	a f g h i		
Cape May Warbler	a i		
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	a b c d f g h i j		
Yellow-rumped Warbler	a b c d e f g h i j		
Black-thr. Green Warbler	a b c d g h i j		
Blackburnian Warbler	a b g h i j		
Pine Warbler	d h i j		
Prairie Warbler	a b c d f g h i		
Palm Warbler	j		
Blackpoll Warbler	a h i j		
Black-and-white Warbler	a b c d g h i j		
American Redstart	a b e f g h i j		
Worm-eating Warbler	d		
Ovenbird	a b c d e f g h i j		
Northern Waterthrush	b c f g h i j		
Louisiana Waterthrush	a b c d f g h i		
Common Yellowthroat	a b c d e f g h i j		
Wilson's Warbler	a c d i		
Canada Warbler	a c h i j		
Scarlet Tanager	c d f g h j		
Northern Cardinal	a b c d e f g h i j		





## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

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

Monday, Nov. 3 The Restoration, Management and Biology of the Wild Turkey in New York State. Karl Parker, DEC wildlife biologist will discuss this topic and include other interesting items, facts and updates relating to birds, wildlife observation, and NYSDEC's Bureau of Wildlife. Karl was born and raised in NY's Shawangunk Valley. He received his B.A. in biology from Wittenberg Univ., Springfield, NY; M.S. in Wildlife Management from SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry. His Master's thesis discussed common loons on acidified lakes in the Adirondacks. Since 1990 he has worked as a wildlife biologist in DEC Region 4 Schenectady office.

Monday, Dec 1 Christmas Party and program on Brazil with HMBC members and frequent travelers Dale and Lillian Samuelson. Bring some food to share and enjoy another fine program by the Samuelsons.

Monday, Jan 5 Bill Gorman of HMBC, movies on birding Texas.

Monday, Feb 2 Peter Nye of NYSDEC on eagles in New York State.

Monday, Mar 2 Gregg Recer of HMBC on California and Utah.

Wednesday, Apr 22, location and time: TBA, HMBC Annual meeting and Clay and Patricia Sutton on "How to Spot Hawks and Owls"

Monday, May 5 Mike Storey, Adirondack Park Agency, on the Adirondacks.

TURKEY I





## Upcoming HMBC Field Trips

*(Consult your field trip schedule or Birdline (439-8080) for trip details)*

### **Edmund Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge (a.k.a. Brigantine)**

Sat.-Mon. Oct 11-13

Coord: Walt Sabin 439-7344

Reservations: Oct. 1

Spend Columbus Day weekend to this popular NWR. At least part of one day will be spent at Avalon Seawatch. Expect an interesting species list from the height of fall migration.

### **Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area**

Sat. Oct 25

Coord: Walter Ellison 456-6224 (home), 42-4320 (work)

Spend the day at one of the better VT waterfowl areas, including various species of geese. Raptors are also a possibility.

### **Autumn Waterfowl at Vischer Ferry**

Sun. Oct 26

Coord: Dan Welch 783-1932 (work)

Study waterfowl species and other late migrants at this popular location.

### **Tomahannock Reservoir**

Sun. Nov 2

Coord: Bill Gorman 477-4921

Spend the morning as we circle the Reservoir. Expect a large variety of water birds, including loons, grebes, ducks and geese.

### **Franklin Mountain**

Sat or Sun. Nov 8 or 9

Coord: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen 899-2678

Visit this hawk watch site near Oneonta. Although weather conspired against us last year, Golden Eagles are a good possibility at this NYS hawk watch in November.

### **Evening Waterfowl at Collins Lake**

Sun. Nov 16

Coord: Carl George 388-6330 (work)

Collin Lake serves as a night time roost for Mallard and American Black Duck. Observe this phenomenon and practice your low-light condition observations.

### **Lower Mohawk River**

Sat. Dec 6

Coord: Walter Ellison 456-6224 (home), 442-4320 (work)

Focus on gull identification skills including our common and less common species. Waterfowl and raptors are other strong possibilities.

### **1997 Christmas Counts**

Sat. Dec 20, 1997. Schenectady Co. CBC

Sat. Dec 27, 1997. So. Rensselaer Co. CBC

Sat. Jan 3, 1998. Troy CBC

Save these dates for the upcoming 1997 Christmas Counts.

### **1998 Field Trip Planning Underway**

■ Planning for the 1998 Field Trip Schedule is underway. If you have ideas to contribute, or would like to lead a field trip, please contact Field Trip Chair, Joan Cipriani, 374-3729.



## Field Trip Reports

### **Bear Swamp Westerlo, NY 12 July 1997**

It was a wonderful summer's day for a trip to Bear Swamp in the Helderberg Mountains. The giant rhododendrons were beautiful. The blueberry bushes were loaded with berries, yet still very green! Many species of ferns were also observed by the group.

Thirty-four species of birds were identified. The wooded swamp was filled with the ethereal songs of the **VEERY**, **HERMIT** and **WOOD THRUSHES**. The group observed immature **WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS** and a family of **YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS**. Besides getting life list birds for some of the participants. Another highlight of the trip was the discovery of a gray fox skull!

Besides the hum and buzz of deer flies around our heads, the trip was enjoyed by all.

*Weather:* Mostly sunny, warm and breezy.

#### *Bird Species Observed:*

**TURKEY VULTURE, BROAD-WINGED HAWK, WILD TURKEY, MOURNING DOVE, YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, DOWNY WOODPECKER, EASTERN WOOD PEWEE, GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER, TREE SWALLOW, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, BROWN CREEPER, WINTER WREN, VEERY, HERMIT THRUSH, AMERICAN ROBIN, GRAY CATBIRD, CEDAR WAXWING, RED-EYED VIREO, BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER, OVENBIRD, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, CANADA WARBLER, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, SONG SPARROW, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, DARK-EYED JUNCO, NORTHERN ORIOLE, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH**

Total: 34 species

#### *Mammals Observed:*

Red squirrel, Gray Squirrel, White-tailed deer, Chipmunks, Gray fox skull

*- Jocelyn Cole*

### **Field Trip Leaders!**

Don't forget to send a summary of your trip to *Feathers*. It is a great way to share the excitement of great birds, interesting experiences and challenging identifications with the Club. Submit reports by the 15th of odd-numbered months for publication in the next newsletter (delivered around the 15th of even number months!)



## Hawk Watch Information

Some hawk-related web pages are available on the Internet.

Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch	<a href="http://www.ornith.cornell.edu/Birding/ny/central/FranklinMt.html">http://www.ornith.cornell.edu/Birding/ny/central/FranklinMt.html</a>
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary	<a href="http://www.hawkmountain.org/">http://www.hawkmountain.org/</a>
Raptor Link Clearinghouse	<a href="http://www.charweb.org/organizations/science/raptorcenter/ClearingHouse.html">http://www.charweb.org/organizations/science/raptorcenter/ClearingHouse.html</a>
Raptor Repertoire	<a href="http://www.theriver.com/Public/raptor/index.html">http://www.theriver.com/Public/raptor/index.html</a>
HMANA's Hawk Migration Studies: Western Continental	<a href="http://www.idbsu.edu/english/jbattali/raptors/HMANA/westcont.html">http://www.idbsu.edu/english/jbattali/raptors/HMANA/westcont.html</a>

Another useful resource are listserves. Two of them are:

The Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA) listserv. To subscribe, send a message to [majordomo@virginia.edu](mailto:majordomo@virginia.edu) with the message text: *subscribe hmana* in the body of the message, leave the subject line blank.

The Raptor Repertoire listserv. To subscribe, send a message to [majordom@theriver.com](mailto:majordom@theriver.com) with *subscribe raptors* in the body of the message, leave the subject line blank.

*(Info courtesy of the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch News.)*





**Cape May Bird Observatory**  
*presents*  
**The Bird Show**  
**A Birding Festival**

**Exhibits:** Vendors including artists, carvers, gifts, crafts, conservation organizations, bird clubs, optics, tour companies, backyard bird habitat, birding publications and outdoor equipment.

**Workshops:** On bird feeding, basic bird watching, hawk watching, waterfowl identification, butterfly watching, backyard habitat, choosing binoculars & scopes, and more.

**Field Trips:** Outdoor walks led by local experts, NJ Audubon staff and nationally recognized leaders. Visit Cape May's famous birding hotspots.

**Celebrated Speakers:** Daily programs and workshops given by nationally renowned celebrities: Pete Dunne, Scott Edwards, Eldon Greij, Kevin Karlson, Kenn Kaufman, Dr. Paul Kerlinger, Dr. John Kricher, Paul Lehman, Jane Ruffin, Will Russell, Clay Sutton, Pat Sutton.

**Back Bay Cruise:** Voyages of discovery into the Atlantic coastal back bays.

**Kid's Fest:** Celebrate nature through hands on activities, crafts and more. At the Kiwanis Club.

**Art Exhibits:** Featuring local and internationally acclaimed wildlife artists, photographers and carvers.

**Bookstores:** Natural History shops featuring optics, bird feeders, gift items and books.

*Thursday Evening, Oct. 30* - Kick off the festival with Pete Dunne, Director of the Cape May Bird Observatory at the Grand Hotel.

*Friday Evening, Oct. 31* - Reception to meet the Authors, Artists, Photographers, Celebrated Speakers and Exhibitors.

**And don't forget the birds** - Last year over 1,000,000 (1 million!!) hawks, Bald & Golden Eagles, owls, migrating sea ducks, Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Bluebirds, finches and more were seen...**All in Cape May.**

All programs and events are south of the Cape May Canal. Many are *within walking* distance and all are within a ten minute drive from Victorian Cape May.

New Jersey Audubon Society is a not-for-profit, statewide, membership supported organization. Founded in 1897 and one of the oldest independent Audubon societies. NJAS is not affiliated with the National Audubon Society.

For more information, call (609) 884-2736 or (609) 861-0700. (Cathy Graichen - 899-2678 can provide more details as well.)



## HMBC BOARD FOR 1995 - 1996

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Denise Hilton	785-6760
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Social:	Denise Hilton	785-6760
Jr. Activities:	vacant	

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

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

### "Wildlife in Winter" Poster Contest

A poster contest for students, ages 12-14 years.

Prizes: 2 scholarships to NYS Dept of Env. Conservation summer education camps. Runner-up prizes donated by Backyard Birds Nature Shop, Bird Lovers Specialty Shop, Wild Birds Unlimited.

Deadline: Dec 1, 1997

Sponsored by Audubon Society of the Capital Region.

Contact Sowmya Sundararajan, 452-1906, for more information.



**Rio Grande Valley  
Birding Festival**

Workshops, Exhibits and Field trips will highlight the Fourth Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival, *Tropical Birds of the Border*, on Nov. 12-16.

For more information, please contact Terri Bortness at  
Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival  
PO Box 3162  
Harlingen, TX 78551-3162  
(956) 423-5440 or (800) 531-7346  
Fax (956) 425-3870  
Email: [tbortness@harlingen.com](mailto:tbortness@harlingen.com)  
Web site: <http://nature.harlingen.com>



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## DELAWARE BAY HORSESHOE CRAB DECLINE A CONCERN FOR MIGRANT SHOREBIRDS

*Editor's Note:* A dramatic decrease in the numbers of spawning Horseshoe Crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*) in Delaware Bay this past spring drew major concern from conservationists, birders and other groups with an interest in the annual phenomenon. Several migrant shorebird species depend strongly on this food source to replenish energy reserves mid-way through their long-distance trek to the arctic breeding grounds. Their arrival at Delaware Bay is strongly synchronized with the short Horseshoe Crab spawning season. Concerns were raised that if the decreased crab spawning continued in future years large decreases in some shorebird populations might result. In response to this situation, The State of New Jersey issued a temporary ban on Horseshoe Crab harvesting and proposed new regulations to control future harvesting. The Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club Board of Directors voted to submit comments strongly endorsing the proposed regulations. The HMBC letter to Governor Witman in support of the proposal and the Governor's response are reproduced below and on the next page in their entirety.

Honorable Christine Todd Whitman  
Governor, State of New Jersey  
Executive Office of the Governor  
State Capitol  
Trenton, New Jersey 08625

October 10, 1997

Dear Governor Whitman:

The Board of Directors of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club, on behalf of its approximately four hundred members, strongly endorses the proposed regulations on the taking of horseshoe crabs by New Jersey fisherman on the shores of Delaware Bay. The regulations, as published by the Office of the Attorney General on August 18, 1997, are a good first step for ensuring a critical food supply for the hundreds of thousands of migratory shorebirds -- Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Sanderlings and others -- which time their arrival at Reeds Beach and other New Jersey Delaware Bay Shore points during the spawning period of horseshoe crabs in the last two weeks of May.

After a flight of seven thousand miles from the coast of Brazil the world's population of Red Knots, estimated by reputable ornithologists at only 150,000, is dependent upon these horseshoe crab eggs to replenish their stores of fat, allowing them to continue their northward migration to their Arctic breeding grounds. Without this food supply, the world's population of Red Knots would be seriously threatened with extinction.

The Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club conducts approximately forty field trips annually, several to the Delmarva Peninsula, Cape May, Forsythe (Brigantine) National Wildlife Refuge and points on the Jersey Shore from Sandy Hook and Barnegat to Stone Harbor. The Club has sponsored these trips for nearly fifty years. We travel via the Garden State Parkway, New Jersey Turnpike and Cape May-Lewes Ferry and patronize gas stations, motels and restaurants throughout New Jersey.

Many birding tour groups and other bird clubs also do so. Without the huge numbers of shorebirds which stop to feed and rest along the Delaware Bay shore in the spectacular annual shorebird migration, New Jersey would be a much less attractive destination for birders. Aside from the economic impact by birders on New Jersey tourism, the world could lose one of its natural wonders-- the annual spring migration of shorebirds from the tip of South America to the Arctic Circle.

While we are supportive of these excellent first steps, their impact on the resurgence of the horseshoe crab population in a reasonable time is uncertain. Periodic re-evaluation of these measures' effect on the numbers of horseshoe crabs is essential. Even stronger measures, or a return to the fishing moratorium, should be considered in the future, should these restrictions prove ineffective in restoring the horseshoe crab population to its former levels.

Sincerely Yours,

Ann E. B'Rells, President  
Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club  
3187 Woodhaven Drive  
Schenectady, NY 12303



## Horseshoe crabs cont.....



### State of New Jersey

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
PO Box 001  
TRENTON NJ 08625-0001

October 28, 1997

CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN  
Governor

Ms. Ann E. B'Rells  
President  
Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club  
3187 Woodhaven Drive  
Schenectady, NY 12303

Dear Ms. B'Rells:

Thank you for writing to me about the harvesting of horseshoe crabs.

At my request, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Commissioner Robert Shinn issued a temporary ban on the taking of horseshoe crabs on May 30, 1997. As you may know, on July 29, 1997, the DEP announced the establishment of new restrictions on the harvesting of horseshoe crabs to help preserve this unique species and to protect migratory shorebirds that depend on the horseshoe crab eggs for food.

The new restrictions had limited harvesting to Tuesdays and Thursdays in May and June, to back-bay areas only, and to a 100-crab daily limit per crabber, who may harvest the crabs only by hand. No netting, trawling, or dredging would be allowed at any time of year. Additionally, the DEP Division of Fish, Game and Wildlife would only license horseshoe crabbers who previously held crab permits and eel or conch licenses for at least two years during the past four years and who reported their catches to the division.

On September 25, 1997, the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council voted to veto these restrictions. An appeal filed in the Appellate Division of the N.J. Superior Court by Attorney General Peter Verniero, the N.J. Audobon Society, the American Littoral Society, and the National Audobon Society then led to a decision by Judge Philip Carchman to issue a temporary stay on crabbing to give the court time to review the matter.

On October 21, 1997, the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council agreed to ban mechanical catching of the crabs. The Council also temporarily lifted the limit on hand harvesting to allow all interested parties to contribute to the development of appropriate policy in this regard. Negotiations will be completed and the policy determined before the hand-harvesting season begins again in the spring.

Again, thank you for writing in support of protective efforts in behalf of the horseshoe crab and migratory shorebirds. Best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Christine Todd Whitman  
Governor



## PROGRAM REPORTS *Denise Hilton & Scott Stoner*

### Hawk Migration & ID

More than 80 people turned out for the first program of the fall season, a two-part presentation on hawks and hawk watching. Retired environmental educator Bob Budliger led off with a slide program on the basics of hawk identification. Key advice was to go out and *look* at hawks, every single bird! Observe 100 Red-tailed Hawks, Turkey Vultures, etc. Good birders study the common species over and over again allowing them to recognize when something different turns up.

Bob continued with a description of hawk migration — most species follow ridge lines or coast lines and there can be major concentrations of birds at points of land such as Cape May, New Jersey. Hawk watching enables birders to record trends and changes in populations. For instance, Turkey Vultures have increased in Albany County over the past 30 years, and Black Vulture is moving north into New York State, with the first nesting recorded along the Shawangunk ridge.

Bob then described some of the basics of hawk identification. During migration, flight style and silhouette are keys to identifying hawks. For instance, broad, flat soaring wings and a massive protruding head distinguish Bald Eagle from Golden Eagle. Buteos generally have broad wings and short broad tails. Tail banding and patterns on the underwing and belly can be useful field marks to concentrate on. Accipiters have relatively short rounded wings and long tails while falcons have pointed, swept-back wings, long narrow tails and are seen more frequently in powered flight rather than soaring or gliding. Turkey vultures can be identified from long distances by noting their strong v-shaped wing dihedral and the rocking motion as they soar.

Bob Kirker followed the ID discussion with some history of the hawkwatch in Albany County. The HMBC began conducting field trips there in 1974. In 1995 Bob Kirker, Brad Bidwell and Larry Fetters spawned the idea of conducting a full-fledged hawkwatch. The goal was 50% coverage in 1996. Thanks to many people who responded to Bob's requests they got 100% coverage from September 7 through December 7 for a total of 452 hours which was the 8th highest among 60 sites in the northeast US. 1996 season highlights included 763 Broad-wings on September 14, 10 Rough-legs on November 27 and the 8th-highest count of Golden Eagles.

Many thanks to both gentlemen for their fine program and for all their work to build the hawk watch into such a great success in so short a time.

### Fall Warbler ID

About 30 people gathered at Five Rivers on September 10 to learn about the always challenging identification of fall warblers from Walter Ellison.

Walter reminded us of fall's particular ID challenges, such as faded plumages blending in with the yellowish leaves, lack of singing, large numbers of young, non-descript birds, and large, mixed flocks of very small greenish birds that include not only various warblers, but also kinglets and vireos.

On the "good news" side of the coin, Walter reminded us of the warblers that really do not change that much from spring to fall, such as the Black and White Warbler and the Redstart. For those that do change significantly, the adult birds are generally not as affected as their young, which are very numerous in the fall. Along the same lines, many of the male birds are not as affected as the females, but in the fall the females are away from the protective cover of the nest, and therefore much more visible, and therefore, confusing.

Some of the fall warblers retain the same field marks they bear in the spring, but are much duller in appearance. These would include the Nashville, Northern Parula, Yellow, Magnolia, Cape May, Myrtle and Blackburnian Warblers, among others.

Others are entirely different looking in the fall, but still distinctive, particularly, the Chestnut-Sided Warbler.

Along with some very detailed field marks to help in identification, Walter also suggested using a knowledge of migration schedules to aid this process. For example, with a late August sighting of a waterthrush, it may be difficult to identify the species by sight. Knowing that the Louisiana Waterthrush has generally moved on by the mid-point in that month will help the birder make the identification.

As always, Walter's program was professional, informative, and accompanied by fine slides depicting a wide variety of the birds under discussion. We thank him for an excellent presentation.

### Wild Turkey in NYS

On November 3, Carl Parker, of DEC's Bureau of Wildlife, gave a thorough presentation on the history and biology of the Wild Turkey, which was enjoyed by about 30 people. It was an interesting program, accompanied by fine pictures.

Carl explained that historically, the turkey was found in America by early Spanish explorers, who brought the birds back to Spain where they domesticated them. The Spanish later returned to America with the now tame birds.

There was a distinct drop in turkey population in the 1800's, when by 1850, there were virtually none of the birds left in New York State. This was due to decrease in forested areas and the introduction of disease by domesticated birds.



The situation remained the same for almost a century, until gradually, reforestation of abandoned farmlands led to the reintroduction of a few turkeys which came from a remnant population in Pennsylvania which expanded northward into western New York.

As a few of these turkeys began to appear in the 1940's, efforts began to introduce game farm raised turkeys into the state. These efforts failed, probably because the farm-raised turkeys lacked the wild birds naturally wariness.

In the 1950's, Wild Turkeys were captured and released within the State in what became a very successful program of reintroduction. Turkeys are now successful throughout the State, except in the Adirondacks.

The Wild Turkey's diet is varied, consisting of fiddleheads, salamanders, grapes, acorns, waste grain found in cow manure, among other things.

Breeding behavior is triggered by day length, and is marked by gobbling and displaying by the male. Nests are simple, often located at the base of a tree, where 12 eggs are generally laid in mid April. Predators of eggs and young include skunks, raccoons and possums.

Prior to 1950, turkeys were not at all protected. In the early days of their restoration, they were completely protected, and later, a very limited season was allowed.

Carl ended his presentation by stating the goal that the Wild Turkey will remain in good numbers in New York State, to be enjoyed by hunters, birders and others for many years.

### **Maine and Bonaventure Island**

Back by popular demand, free-lance naturalist John Green of Massachusetts presented a double-feature on the birds and natural splendors of the Northeast. The first presentation was on the Gannets of Bonaventure, followed by "Aquarius."

John has made seven trips to Quebec's Gaspé region, south of the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, and has a fantastic collection of photographs to show for it. For many birders, Gaspé is Bonaventure Island with its active colony of Northern Gannets, and John certainly described it well. With crystal clear photos, detailed behavioral observations of avian coexistence in a crowded environment, music and humor, we got an educational and interesting picture of the gannetry. It was as close and as good a look as one could get, without having to endure the aroma of such a large colony!

But Gaspé is more than the birds of Bonaventure, and John showed us that as well. From the nature center on a bluff to the many "moods" of Perce Rock, he painted a lovely picture of the very place the Club will be journeying to this coming July.

After a break, John resumed with "Aquarius," a slide/music program devoted to capturing nature's beauty of water and many other things in remarkable fashion. Drawing heavily from Maine's immense Baxter State Park, the show made us all realize that we were seeing a true expert practice his profession. Again, the photos were incredibly sharp, the correlation with the music superb, and the whole show was just a beautiful experience.

John ended with a reminder to the converted, and a plea to all, to get others to experience the wonders of the outdoors, even for a little while, for if they know it, they may be more likely to act or vote to protect it. No one disagrees with him, but it's a good reminder that it's a way we can all make an impact.

Note: For those looking ahead to the final year of the millennium, John has agreed to return once again, this time to speak at the Club's 1999 annual meeting and dinner. Date, place and topic to be announced in 1998!

## **1998 Renewals!!**

It's time once again to renew your HMBC membership. Look for your membership renewal form which came in the same mailing with this issue of Feathers. Promptly renewing your HMBC membership helps us continue to provide the publications, programs and field trips that you've come to expect from your bird club. Thanks!!



## HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRDING AREAS: GREENPORT CONSERVATION AREA

by  
*Cris Winters*

Located off Joslen Boulevard just north of the City of Hudson, the Greenport Conservation Area consists of over 400 acres of mixed habitat open space along the Hudson River. It was purchased in 1992 by the Columbia Land Conservancy and the Open Space Institute.

The area is managed by the Columbia Land Conservancy for wildlife diversity and for rustic recreation for the public. Fields are being managed to provide food and nesting sites for a variety of grassland birds. Some portions of the site will be maintained as shrub habitat, and the woodlands will continue to be managed for open and dense understory growth. The wetlands on the site are part of the Hudson River system. They consist mainly of emergent tidal marsh and support two rare wetland plant species. Access to the wetlands is limited by the steep slopes, but canoes can enter the site to explore the tidal creeks.

Since April 1997, I have been conducting a bird survey at the Greenport Conservation Area to determine the bird species using the area over the course of a year. Nearly 100 species have been observed so far, including American Woodcock, Bobolink, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Barred Owl, and several warbler species. I survey approximately once a week, and any additional observers are welcome.

The information collected through this survey will help the Columbia Land Conservancy staff make land management decisions based on the species' needs, such as nest substrate type for Bobolinks. The Conservancy hopes to have biological surveys conducted for other groups of organisms, such as butterflies, small mammals, reptiles, and amphibians.

The Conservation Area is open to the public year-round from dawn to dusk for activities such as hiking, birding, and cross-country skiing. It is located on Joslen Boulevard, across from the Joslen Motor Lodge at the site of the old Daisy Hill Farm. For information on (or volunteers for) the bird survey, call Cris Winters at 758-2170. To reach the Columbia Land Conservancy and Abby Duchon (Land Manager at Greenport), call 392-5252.

## Announcements

Congratulations to Bill Cook on the publication of his first book entitled *Avian Desert Predators*, which features chapters on Roadrunners, Owls, Hawks, Shrikes and Vultures, etc. Bill teaches at Columbia Greene Community College and is an active expert birder who has lead many field trips for the Club. Recently he saw a Golden Eagle at the hawk watch site in the Helderbergs.

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HMBC was awarded a certificate of appreciation at the November 6, 1997 annual meeting of the Friends of Grafton Lakes State Park. Members of the Club helped this year by compiling a checklist of over 200 species of birds found at the park, which has 2300 acres of prime woodland habitat typical of the Adirondacks, and several lakes. HMBC will be featuring at least two trips there in 1998. In addition, Grafton is holding a Christmas Bird Count on Sunday, December 28th, and will be holding a winter festival on Saturday, January 10. For details call 279-1155.

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The Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks has initiated a capital campaign to raise funds to purchase the Paul Shaefer House on St. David's Ln. in Niskayuna. The Association currently rents the property and has a goal to create a Research Center for the Forest Preserve at the site, which would include renovations to house the Association's publicly-accessible Adirondack Research Library. Paul Shaefer was a major force as a conservationist protecting the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves.

For further information, contact David H. Green, Association Executive Director at (518) 377-1452.



## **UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

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

Monday, January 5, 1998. **Texas Birding Movies.** HMBC member Bill Gorman will show us his moving picture entitled *TEXAS BIRDS*. He will take us to many of the best birding spots in Texas. We will see a number of Texas specialty birds along with some of the more common ones. The moving pictures are dramatic and make the birds seem to come to life. Birding Sites include: Galveston, Attwater Prairie-Chicken NWR, Aransas NWR, Laguna Atascosa NWR, Brownsville Dump, Santa Ana NWR, Bentsen-Rio Grande Valley State Park, Falcon Dam and Big Bend National Park.

Monday, February 2, 1998. **State of the Eagle - 1998.** Come and find out how many eaglets we fledged in 1997, where some of wintering visitors go in the spring when they leave NY, and where some of the best spots in the state are for eagle-watching. Special bonus: find out what's up with our other eagle, the golden, in NY and in the east. Peter is the leader of DEC's Endangered Species Unit, and has been directing our Bald Eagle restoration program since its inception in 1976. He is also currently the leader of the federal Northern States Bald Eagle Recovery Team. Although still spry and energetic, he is looking for a highly motivated individual to "pick up the Bald Eagle torch" in NY, so he can think about retiring in a few years. For now, he continues to climb nest trees and band every eaglet produced in our State.

**This program will be followed by a field trip on February 7, 1998 to the  
Mongaup Valley Bald Eagle viewing areas.**

Monday, March 2, 1998. **California Coast & Utah.** HMBC member Gregg Recer will present a slide program on birding in California and southern Utah. A combination of extremely varied habitats and breath-taking scenery make these areas on "the left coast" favorite birding and general outdoor-travel destinations.

Wednesday, Apr 22, location and time: TBA, HMBC Annual meeting and Clay and Patricia Sutton on "How to Spot Hawks and Owls"

Monday, May 5 Mike Storey, Adirondack Park Agency, on the Adirondacks.



## Upcoming HMBC Field Trips

*(Consult your field trip schedule or Birdline (439-8080) for trip details)*

### FIVE RIVERS NEW YEAR'S DAY BIRD COUNT

Thur JAN 1

Coord: Al Mapes 439-4086

HMBC joins the Annual New Year's count at Five Rivers and encourages its members to participate. Groups will go out at 9:30 a.m. from the Interpretive Building (visitor center), but birders are welcome to arrive earlier to get a head start.

### TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Sat JAN 3

Compiler: Larry Alden 877-7148

### ANNUAL STATE WATERFOWL COUNT

Sun JAN 11

Coord: Paul Grattan 237-0661

On the local segment of this statewide event, participants will count waterfowl and other winter birds on the Hudson River between North Troy and Hudson Falls. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot of the Hannaford Supermarket on the east end of the North Troy-Waterford Bridge (Route 4).

### AMHERST ISLAND, PT PENINSULA & CAPE VINCENT OWL TRIP

Sat-Mon JAN 17-19

Coord: Bill Lee 374-3426

**Reservations by January 10**

Areas such as Amherst Island, Ont., Pt Peninsula and Cape Vincent, NY can attract such sought-after species as Great Gray Owl, Snowy Owl, Northern Hawk-owl, and even Boreal Owl. In addition, the Gray Partridge is a resident bird at Cape Vincent.

### WINTER RARE BIRD TRIP

JAN or FEB

Coord: Bill Lee 374-3426

**Reservations by January 17**

If any rare birds are reported in our general area we plan to take a trip to look for them. If interested, make reservations with the coordinator who will notify participants of the trip details.

### FORT EDWARD (WASHINGTON COUNTY)

Sat JAN 24

Coord: Beth and Brad Bidwell 793-7903

Join us on this popular trip to Eastern New York's hotspot for wintering raptors. Ft. Edward is a perennial good location for Snowy and Short-eared Owls as well as Rough-legged Hawks. It was also the site of a much-publicized Northern Hawk-Owl a few years ago. We will also search for open-field passerines. We will meet at 2:00 p.m. and bird until dark. Call coordinator for meeting place.

### COHOES WATERFORD AREA

Sun JAN 25

Coord: Gary Goodness 272-5830

This area, including Cohoes Falls and Simmons Island, offers a great opportunity to study the gulls and waterfowl that winter along the Mohawk River. We will look for Iceland and Glaucous Gulls, usually present in small numbers in winter. We will leave at 10:00 a.m. from the Golden Krust Bakery at 180 Ontario St. in Cohoes (on Route 470 about 1/8 mile east of Route 787, across from the U-Haul). Or, join us there at 9:00 a.m. for breakfast (it is also a diner).



## **MONGAUP VALLEY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**

Sat FEB 7

Coord: Scott Stoner & Denise Hilton 785-6760

**Reservations by February 4**

This area in Sullivan County offers the best possible viewing opportunities in the state for Bald Eagles. A viewing blind gives excellent close up looks at eagles. Should weather cause cancellation of the trip on Saturday, we will plan for Sunday, February 8. If there are any questions on the weather, please call the coordinators.

## **BIRDS AND SNOWSHOES AT FIVE RIVERS**

Sun FEB 8

Coord: Ray Perry 475-0291 (work)

**Reservations by February 4**

Five Rivers' 300 acres of fields, forests, ponds and streams have hosted over 200 species of birds over the past 20 years. We'll begin inside the Interpretive Building (visitor center) where we can enjoy the birds at the feeders. Our walk will take us through fields and forests, as well as along the banks of the Vlomankill. Snowshoes will be provided for those who need them. No experience with snowshoes or birds is necessary. If snow depth is insufficient for snowshoeing, we will do the walk without them. Meet at the Interpretive Building at 2:00 p.m.

## **CAPE ANN & PLUM ISLAND**

Sat - Mon FEB 14-16

Coord: Bill Lee 374-3426

**Reservations by February 1**

Our popular winter trip to the Massachusetts coast will focus on the north shore from Nahant, just north of Boston, to the New Hampshire coast. Join us in search

of alcids, white-winged gulls, Purple Sandpiper, Barrow's Goldeneye, Harlequin Duck, Eiders, Snow Buntings, Lapland Longspur, Short-eared and Snowy Owls and other raptors on this three-day weekend.

## **SACHUEST POINT AND RHODE ISLAND COAST**

Sat-Sun FEB 28-MAR 1

Coord: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen  
899-2678

**Reservations by Feb 9**

Sachuest Point is a narrow grassland strip separating Narragansett Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. It is also the concentration point for Harlequin ducks along the New England coast. Loons, Grebes, sea ducks including Harlequin Duck, Purple Sandpiper, Common Black Headed Gull and possibilities including Barrow's Goldeneye and Northern Gannet should highlight this trip.

## **1997 Christmas Bird Counts**

HMBC annually sponsors three Christmas Bird Counts. Everyone (including feeder-watchers in the count areas) is strongly encouraged to join in on one or all of these fun activities. Contact the count compilers for more information:

**Schenectady Count** — Sat., December 20  
Compiler: Bill Lee, 374-3426

**So. Rensselaer Count** — Sat., December 27  
Compiler: Jackie Bogardus, 283-6603

**Troy Count** — Sat., January 3  
Compiler: Larry Alden, 877-7148



## Field Trip Reports

### Southern NH Coast & Newburyport Ma. August 16 - 17, 1997

Fifteen HMBC members spent a productive weekend searching for shorebirds and seabirds on the coast around Newburyport Ma. Saturday morning began with a pelagic boat trip out of Newburyport. The boat was one of the regularly-scheduled whale-watching boats which visit Stellwagen Bank daily during the summer. We had excellent weather, with calm water conditions and good light on most of the trip. Whale activity was quite good with numbers of HUMPBACK and MINKE WHALES and one FINBACK WHALE. Complementing the whales was a moderately good mix of birds including BONAPARTE'S GULLS and FORSTER'S and COMMON TERNS on the Merrimack River, NORTHERN GANNET, a small number of un-id'd storm petrels (probably WILSON'S) a couple-dozen GREATER SHEARWATERS, and one or two each of CORY'S, SOOTY AND MANX SHEARWATERS. A tantalizing glimpse of a large dark-plumaged bird with white flashes in the primaries was spotted by one member of the group (GR). It was initially dismissed as a first-year herring gull, but after a second look, it was probably a JAEGER. Unfortunately, the bird flew past the stern and was gone before any other birders on board could get on it.

We spent several hot hours Saturday afternoon searching the Seabrook and Hampton, NH marshes for shorebirds and waders without a great deal of success. We did find GREAT and SNOWY EGRETS, GREAT BLUE and GREEN HERONS and BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERONS, several OSPREYS and RED-TAILED HAWKS and a few shorebirds including SEMIPALMATED PLOVER, LEAST, SPOTTED, SEMIPALMATED AND PECTORAL SANDPIPERS and both YELLOWLEGS species. Shorebird numbers and diversity were surprisingly low. A single SALTMARSH SHARP-TAILED SPARROW was spotted at the Parker River Bridge.

We spent the morning into early afternoon at Parker River NWR (Plum Island). We started on the beach at the southern end of the island and found several interesting species including SANDERLINGS still in partial alternate plumage, RUDDY TURNSTONES and PIPING PLOVER. We then moved to Hellcat Swamp where we found the AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN which had been there for several days as well as a nice mix of shorebirds and waders. The highlight were three STILT SANDPIPERS which everyone eventually got very good looks at after lengthy study by several trip members to separate these individuals from the large numbers of YELLOWLEGS

and DOWITCHERS present in the pool. Other Plum Island highlights included GLOSSY IBIS, PURPLE MARTIN and huge clouds of TREE, BANK AND BARN SWALLOWS.

This was a first try at a trip to this area in mid-August and we were happy with the outcome — 65 total species with a good mix of ocean and beach/marsh water birds.

*Gregg Recer  
Cathy Graichen*

### Vischer Ferry August 20, 1997

The water level was low along the Mohawk River which resulted in a deviation from the "normal" trip to Vischer Ferry. We began on the evening of August 20 as usual, at the main entrance at Riverview and Van Vranken, and a dozen or so birders quickly checked out the ponds at the end of the dirt road. No Wood Stork this year, no Ruff and not even a bittern, but we did enjoy COMMON MOORHEN, GREEN HERON, GREAT BLUE HERON AND GREAT EGRET. Shorebirds included LESSER YELLOWLEGS, KILLDEER, AND LEAST, SPOTTED AND SOLITARY SANDPIPERS. A SHARP-SHINNED HAWK and the expected AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, CEDAR WAXWINGS AND SWAMP SPARROWS rounded out the list.

The low waters along the River had caused some flats to be exposed about one quarter mile east of the end of Ferry Drive, so most of us drove over there to continue birding before the light faded. We were treated to most of the same heron and shorebird species as above, along with SEMIPALMATED PLOVER. GREEN-WINGED TEAL, RING-BILLED GULL, MALLARD AND CANADA GOOSE were new. If water levels are low again in 1998, a visit here should enhance any trip to Vischer Ferry.

*Scott Stoner*

### Jamaica Bay August 24, 1997

Jamaica Bay supported its reputation as an unfaillingly good place for birds and birding on Sunday 24 August. A group of nine birders formed a loose car pool from the Executive Park lot behind Stuyvesant Plaza in Guilderland at 6:00 AM. Another participant joined us at a Taconic Parkway park-and-ride lot in Dutchess County. We met three more birders from



Refuge headquarters about quarter past nine. Low tide was at 7:00 AM which caused us to explore the West Pond first, we surveyed the East Pond at high tide after having lunch. Highlights of the West Pond tour included nine HERON AND IBIS species, 11 waterfowl species, an immature **BALD EAGLE**, **WILLET**, and almost tailless molting **BOAT-TAILED GRACKLES**. The East Pond yielded more herons and waterfowl, a juvenile female **PEREGRINE FALCON** harassing shorebirds and cormorants, 14 shorebird species featuring **WESTERN SANDPIPER**, a **BLACK TERN**, and a calling **YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO** giving its dispirited sounding cooing "rain crow" song. Our species total was an excellent 82 rendered more noteworthy by our locating them all on foot.

*Walter G. Ellison*

### **Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve September 6, 1997**

The HMBC crew for the Huyck Preserve trip was small but enthusiastic including Bill Brooks, Ruth Reames, Gene Vermilyea, and leaders Walter Ellison and Nancy Martin. We arrived at Myosotis Lake at 8:40 AM. The air was calm and there was a high overcast that produced a few light sprinkles. our walk around the lake produced 50 species. Warblers were little in evidence but we had five shorebirds including **SNIBE**, a juvenile **RED-SHOULDERED HAWK** well seen on the beach (chasing frogs?), a **COOPER'S HAWK** attacking an un-nerved **KINGFISHER**, four **SWALLOWS** including **CLIFF**, **SAP-SUCKERS**, **SCARLET Tanager**, **ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK**, **WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS**, and four **WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILLS** flying high overhead giving distinctive flight calls. We added **HUMMINGBIRD** and **HOODED MERGANSER** at Lincoln Pond. As we did last year (1996) we included and "annex" trip to Basic Creek reservoir with two of our group. We added 12 species en route and at the reservoir including **PIED-BILLED GREBE**, **RING-NECKED DUCK**, and **COMMON MOORHEN**.

*Walter G. Ellison*

### **Vischer Ferry October 5, 1997**

After early morning rain, the weather cleared up in time for our field trip to Vischer Ferry. Except for muddy trails, it was a gorgeous day. The air was warm and many of the trees had changed colors. Some of the birds were even singing!

As we walked the road towards the back

ponds, there were numerous **SPARROWS** (**SONG**, **SWAMP**, and **WHITE-THROATED**) and some small flocks of migrants (**RED-EYED VIREO**, **BLUE-HEADED VIREO**, **WARBLING VIREO**, **PARULA WARBLER**, **YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER**, and **COMMON YELLOWTHROAT**). We were surprised by a **PURPLE FINCH** and a very cooperative **MARSH WREN**.

The two ponds closest to the Mohawk River were the only ones with a fair amount of water. These ponds harbored **LESSER YELLOWLEGS**, **GREAT BLUE HERON**, **GREEN-WINGED TEAL**, **BLUE-WINGED TEAL**, **COMMON SNIFE**, and **ONE LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER**. On the way out, we saw an **AMERICAN BITTERN**.

Other notable birds found during the trip included **EASTERN PHOEBE**, **SHARP-SHINED HAWK**, **PILEATED WOODPECKER**, **BELTED KINGFISHER**, **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET**, and **RUFFED GROUSE**. Many **CEDAR WAXWINGS** were found throughout the area. We had 47 total species and 12 participants.

*Barbara Putnam*

### **Tomhannock Reservoir November 2, 1997**

Neglecting predictions of rain, a group of 13 birders met at Tomhannock Reservoir. Near the causeway we found **GREATER YELLOWLEGS**, a small flock of **DUNLIN**, **NORTHERN SHOVELER**, **CANVASBACK**, **GREATER SCAUP**, **RING-NECKED DUCK**, **COMMON GOLDENEYE**, **RUDDY DUCK**, and both **COMMON** and **HOODED MERGANSER**. As we made our way north, we watched a **COOPER'S HAWK** harassing a **RED-TAILED HAWK** and added **GADWALL** and **AMERICAN COOT** to our list. We watched **GREEN-WINGED TEAL**, **CEDAR WAXWING** and a large **SNAPPING TURTLE** at Otter Creek. A large flock of **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS** and **COMMON GRACKLES** as well as a **COMMON LOON** were sighted at the north end of the reservoir. Near the pumping station we found a small group of **WOOD DUCKS**, a single **BRANT** and some **PIED-BILLED GREBES**. We ended the day with 41 species just before it started to rain.

*Bill Gorman*



**HMBC BOARD FOR 1995 - 1996**

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

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:

recergr@crisny.org

**Reminder!!**

All HMBC Board meetings are open to all Club members. Board meetings take place the second Monday of every odd-numbered month. Meetings are held at Five Rivers Center at 7:00 PM.

**DEC Camperships**

HMBC sponsors 2 camperships each year to send kids to Department of Environmental Conservation Environmental Education Camp. Campers must be 12 - 14 years old at the time they attend. Anyone who would like to have a child sponsored should contact Ann B'Rells at 355-5615 by February 20, 1998.

# Feathers



*PRESIDENT'S CORNER: Winter is upon us -- with all its birding glories of Christmas Counts, concentrated waterfowl, winter flocks, and busy feeders. Resolve to skip hibernation this year. Put on your mittens, pull down those ear flaps, and take advantage of HMBC's winter offerings. Watch for the 1998 Field Trips list, and call Birdline (518-439-8080) often for all the latest in activities and sightings. The three Club Christmas Counts are a wonderful way to start your winter birding. Try one or all! Call the coordinators below today:*

- *Bill Lee at 374-3426 for Schenectady on Saturday December 20th.*
- *Jackie Bogardus at 283-6603 for S. Rensselaer County on Saturday December 28th.*
- *Larry Alden at 877-7148 for Troy on Saturday January 4th.*

*And don't forget the winter club meetings first Monday's at 7:30 at Five Rivers!*

*See ya!*

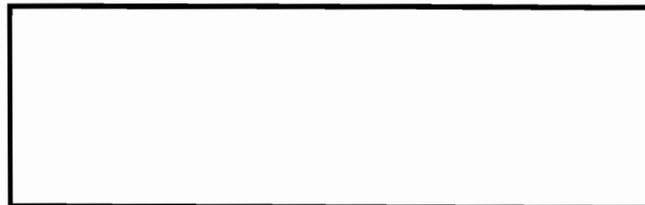
*Ann B' Rells*

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c/o Five Rivers EEC  
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