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Open Space Protection in Clifton Park: Results of 15 Years of Advocacy and Education

By Dave Gibson

Conservation Chair, Capital Region Audubon.

Our Chapter was invited to help shape the ongoing creation of a Town of Clifton Park Open Space Conservation Plan. This follows on nearly fifteen years of work by citizen groups, including the ongoing Friends of Clifton Park Open Space, Saratoga Land Conservancy, United Civic Area Neighborhoods, the Town Environmental Conservation Committee and more.

Behan Planning Associates has been hired by the Town as Open Space Consultants. Behan had a prior contract with Friends of Clifton Park Open Space and Audubon New York in 1998-99. During that contract, the Friends brought in students from Mr. Behan's planning class at SUNY Albany to prepare maps and inventories of cultural and natural resources in the Town. Also in a consulting capacity is American Farmland Trust and Audubon New York. Co-Chairs of the Town's committee is Dave Miller, Executive Director of Audubon New York, and Jim Romano, area businessperson and former member of the town Planning Board. Jason Kemper, town Planning Director, provides technical assistance and direction at the town level.

The meeting on January 16, 2002 was described as the third in a series of "focus groups." Town large landowners such as farmers and developers and business interests had already met. Now environmental and civic organizations were invited to sit down with the town's committee. Behan Associates presented a slide overview of the committee's goal and objectives. It stressed the full scope of goals and objectives, comprehensive inventories and economic analysis of the costs and presumably the benefits of open space protection by a variety of techniques. Finally, town progress in protecting open space was recited, including a voluntary farmland town property tax reduction program, and several recent town real property acquisitions for parkland. The consultants asked those attending to react to what they had heard.

Several townspeople noted the absence of a town walking trail system, citing good examples elsewhere

in North American and in England. There is total reliance on the car and the roadway in the Town (sounds like most towns). The Saratoga Land Conservancy critiqued the Town's failure to date of truly involving partner organizations in the planning program. Others noted the town's requirement for a 5 percent set-aside of "greenspace" for all subdivisions is very inadequate, very dated as far as land values are concerned and fails to protect meaningful open spaces. Still others commented on the ever expanding town infrastructure of water and sewer as obvious inducements for large lot development and loss of contiguous open spaces. People also spoke up about sprawling commercial development and the absence of any use, much less efficient use, of older buildings for new business enterprises.

On behalf of our Chapter, I critiqued the absence of historical information, citing Friends of Clifton Park Open Space. That organization had, since 1996, taken many steps to inform the Town as a whole about the

continued...

In This Issue....

*HMBC Tee-Shirts For Sale
(See Page 15)*

Upcoming Field Trips

Upcoming Programs

Field Trip and Program Reports

Feathers



importance and the details behind land protection and open space planning. Alison Heaphy of Audubon New York had been involved as had our Chapter. A decade of similar organizing in Town for stream, wetland, endangered species and farmland protection had set the stage for the Friends and today's town committee. A detailed set of recommendations for protecting open space had been developed by the Friends in 1998-99, yet had not been cited by the town committee. For instance, Friends had stressed the importance of incorporating open space tools within the Town Comprehensive Plan, Town Planning and Zoning and Subdivision Laws and other key documents that must receive serious attention by Town government and business leaders. Such integration of open space planning with these documents means that open space concerns must be given the legitimacy they deserve and will be effective on a week to week basis. Without it, open spaces invariably become an afterthought and even existing protection is whittled away over time.

Many sensitive lands in the Town, for example lands harboring Karner blue butterfly and associated butterflies, moths and plants have been zoned commercial or industrial and are among the most valuable lands economically. DEC's Endangered Species Unit staff and Town citizens have not always been favorably received by land developers who can frustrate the most basic inventory work to determine how best to allow business to proceed without harming these species or their habitats. I cited examples of such habitat along Wood Road in the Town's northern section. Partnerships that celebrate the presence of endangered species habitats in Town and that negotiate clear objectives for protecting them are needed.

A meeting was called for the following weekend to invite all town residents to participate in an open space planning role-play and exercise. This follows on an open space survey and questionnaire mailed to everyone in this growing community. A very high percentage of Town residents answered the questionnaire, more than 30 percent. This strong interest among the citizenry reflects their desire to stem the frightening loss and fragmentation of wetlands, streams, forests and parks by development since the Northway was built through Town in 1965. The response bodes well should the Town adopt effective open space protection plans.

No further meetings were announced, but all were encouraged to submit ideas and comments to Jason

Kemper, Town Planner at jkemper@cliftonpark.org or One Town Hall Plaza, Clifton Park, NY 12065. The town committee expects to present a final Open Space Plan to the Town Board by fall of 2002.





Field Trip Reports

New Year's Day Count at Five Rivers

For 22 years, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center has rung in the new year with a bird species count and public walk on its diverse 300+ acre grounds. This popular Five Rivers event is co-listed by HMBC trip and draws a large crowd of Club members and general public alike. The 2002 event was no exception, as at least 60 people met Center Director Craig Thompson at 9 AM for a quick look at the feeders and to divide into field parties to scour the grounds. Unlike a Christmas Bird Count, the objective was not to tally individuals, but to locate as many species as possible. Every calendar year, Five Rivers keeps a running annual species list, posted in their bird-viewing room. The New year's Day count starts this list, which often tallies approximately 140 species by the end of the year.

The weather was cold but sunny and, without wind, actually pleasant. The, the four field groups and several individual efforts compiled a total of 37 species including Pileated woodpecker, golden-crowned kinglet, Carolina wren, Northern harrier, Cooper's and sharp-shinned hawks, Eastern bluebird and brown creeper. Walt Sabin anchored the group at the feeders this morning and was rewarded with a red-bellied woodpecker at close range!

Thirteen species had been seen each of the first 21 years, and continued to be reliable this year as well: mourning dove, downy woodpecker, black-capped chickadee, white-breasted nuthatch, Northern cardinal, American tree sparrow, white-throated sparrow, dark-eyed junco house finch, American goldfinch and house sparrow. No new species (to the 21 year composite) were added, but the popularity of this event continues and a good time was had by all. Now that the official count is done, all comers are invited to bird the grounds on their own to add new species for the year and report your sightings to Five Rivers' staff. Your first of the year birds will be added to the large birder's board to your credit!

Thanks to the field group leaders Craig Thompson, Jim Suozzo, Gregg Recer and the field assistance of Phil Whitney and Denise Stoner.

- Scott Stoner

Beginners Trip at Five Rivers January 12, 2002

In the winter at Five Rivers, some of the best birding is often right at their well-stocked feeders. The large windows of the bird-viewing room makes for easy and pleasant observation and a great opportunity to study some of common and occasionally less common species.

On Saturday morning six participants and two leaders met for a morning of relaxed learning at this vantage point. Center Director Craig Thompson filled the feeders and provided us with coffee, and the birds arrived!

We enjoyed looks at Northern Cardinal (including 3 adult and one young male), blue jay, dark-eyed junco, house sparrow, white-throated sparrow (some with very bright white facial markings), both nuthatches, tufted titmouse, black-capped chickadee, American goldfinch, house finch, northern mockingbird, mourning dove and both downy and hairy woodpeckers.

We kept an eye out for three less common species seen recently at the feeders: red-bellied woodpecker, red-winged blackbird and even rusty blackbird (reported a few days earlier both there and at Alan Mapes' feeders, but none of these showed up this morning. However, we had a fun and relaxed learning event.

— Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner



South Florida, December 2001

Jackie Bogardus

Photographs by Frank Bogardus

By all accounts, our trip to south Florida in early December was quite successful. The weather was fantastic, with daytime temperatures reaching into the mid 80s - unseasonably warm we were told. Each day there was little rain, but nothing that deterred us from our adventures. We concentrated mainly on inland birding, tracking down many of the Florida specialties, and in the process touring some excellent wildlife territory, including Shark Valley in the Everglades, Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk, Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, the Seminole Indian Reservation, Babcock Wildlife Management Area, and the Assembly of God church parking lot in busy downtown Fort Myers. Who would have thought that would be where we got what I think was the best, and the cutest, bird of the trip?! Most of you can probably guess what that bird was; if not, you'll have to read on.

Having arrived in Bonita Springs a few days in advance of the "official" club trip, we had an opportunity to explore some areas not on the trip within about ten minutes, we around a small pond in our hotel common species, but it was ex-bellied Woodpecker pecking in front of us, wholly uncon- was happy to note that my skills I quickly identified a Palm War-fous crown and breast streaks. identify because they don't sit breeding plumage and it's a real us who usually only see them all dressed up. Thankfully their drastically as their feathers, and a great clue to the bird's identity.

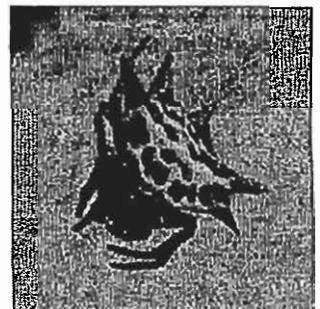


itinerary. Amazingly enough, checked off 16 species in and parking lot. The birds were fairly citing nonetheless to see a Red-away at a palm tree a few yards cerned with our presence. And I were sharp that first morning, as bler, in spite of the missing ru-Warbblers are hard enough to still, but put them in non-challenge, especially for those of briefly in the spring when they're behavior doesn't change as in this case the tail pumping was

Later that day, with the sun blazing overhead, we took a walk along the nature trail at Barefoot Beach Preserve, a two mile loop that meandered through a mile of trees and plants - 30 species of which were nicely marked for easy identification - and returned along the shore. As we set out on the trail, we enjoyed extremely close-up looks at a pair of Osprey nesting on a platform just beyond the Visitors Center. What magnificent creatures these birds are, and what a wonderful experience to be able to watch them so closely for such an extended period of time. Like the Red-bellied Woodpecker earlier that day, the Osprey seemed wholly unconcerned with our presence. In fact, they weren't even bothered by the four-wheeled ATVs that the Preserve rangers were buzzing around on. We, on the other hand, were a little distracted by the noisy, smelly vehicles. Our short walk at the Preserve produced 17 bird species, lots of lizards, really cool spiders - Spiny Orb Weavers were abundant and particularly fascinating - and several Gopher Tortoises. We were told by one of the Preserve volunteers that an armadillo had been seen on the trail earlier in the day, but unfortunately it did not appear while we were there.

The first "official" day of birding was a marvelous trip to Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, where we had the pleasure of taking a private "swamp buggy" tour of the northern section of the preserve, which is closed to the public. Special thanks to Dick Beeler for arranging this for us with Sanctuary manager, Ed Carlson, a delightful man who's had the privilege of working at Corkscrew for almost 30 years.

We climbed aboard the "buggy" - an open-air vehicle with huge tires and no brakes! We bumped and bounced and rolled along through the preserve on a two and a half hour tour that left us in awe. But then, up close and personal looks at alligators tend to have that affect on most people! The birding was terrific too, with the best bird of the day the White





Feathers

Ibis, not because it's rare or difficult to see, but rather because it was so abundant. We watched wave after wave of these birds fly into the marsh, several hundred yards from where we had parked to admire a Wood Stork nesting site. The Wood Storks were far off in the distant trees, but the Ibis, along with Great, Snowy and Cattle Egrets, and Great and Little Blue Herons, were so near we could hear them chattering to themselves, or perhaps to each other, as we watched from the back of the buggy. It was the spectacle of the Ibis, though, that so impressed us. We estimated well over a thousand birds came in as we sat there, and it was difficult to pull ourselves away, but we had much more ground to cover and many more birds to see. We concluded our visit to Corkscrew with a walk along the boardwalk, adding several more species to the day's list, for a total of 39 species.

Saturday, December 8, we traveled to Shark Valley Visitor Center in the Everglades National Park. We encountered much traffic along the way, and were further delayed by an overturned flatbed truck, which had been hauling plants and trees. Not wanting to waste time, though, we did a little birding along the side of the road while we waited for the tow truck to upright the flipped rig. Our roadside list included 13 species, the most abundant of which was the Anhinga. We even got to see one swimming underwater, looking for something to eat.

After the accident was cleared, we continued on to Shark Valley, and, per Bob Budliger's precise instructions, stopped along the way at the abandoned airboat ride place. Here we got a look at both Snail Kite and Short-tailed Hawk, although at quite a distance. We arrived at Shark Valley in time for the two-hour tram ride. The tour turned out to be both educational and enjoyable, and we were able to see a few birds, but not as many as we might have seen had we arrived earlier. Nonetheless, it was interesting to learn a little bit about the history of the area and the changing seasons on the "river of grass". It was also wonderful to see so many alligators, especially the babies. We saw 17 bird species along the way, with Purple Gallinule being my favorite of the day, as it was a life bird for me.

On our return to Bonita Springs, we stopped at Big Cypress Bend Boardwalk, part of the Fakahatchee Strand State Preserve. The boardwalk, approximately 3,000 feet long, was recently reconstructed, and it offered us an excellent vantage point for viewing some beautiful birds and really cool tiny green frogs. We had 13 species of birds here, including a Banded Owl, which delighted all of us when it responded to my imitation of its call. Unfortunately, we did not see the Bald Eagle nesting there; other visitors reporting seeing it just shortly before we had arrived.



On Sunday, December 9, we met Vince McGrath (brother of former club President Kevin McGrath), who took us on an inland trip to find many of the Florida specialties. Our route began in Bonita Springs from where we essentially headed northeast, following a clockwise loop, covering much territory and finding 69 species of birds along the way. Our sightings included Florida Scrub Jay, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Crested Caracara, Snail Kite, Mottled Duck, Common Ground Dove, and White-tailed Kite, to name just a few. We returned to Bonita Springs, exhausted, but delighted with the excellent views we had of many of these magnificently beautiful birds, and enjoyed a wonderful dinner at a very fine Italian restaurant, the name of which has totally escaped me.

Monday, December 10 we ventured out with Vince again, this time heading north to Babcock Wildlife Management Area in Charlotte County. It was a much slower paced day, and we enjoyed many more wonderful bird sightings, including Limpkin, Yellow-throated Warbler, Brown-headed Nuthatch, and a Grasshopper Sparrow, which we observed through the scope.



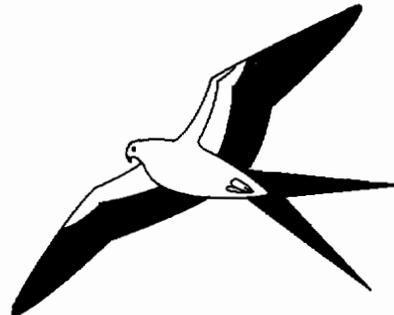
From Babcock WMA, we headed to Fort Myers, where we concluded our official club trip in the parking lot of the Assembly of God Church on Route 41 and Church Road. There we stood about three feet from a pair of Burrowing Owls, watching them as they intently watched us. These birds were, by far, the cutest little birds I've ever seen. Their beautiful yellow eyes were amazing, and so was their tameness. We added one more bird to the list as we left the parking lot - Rock Dove, or as some of you insist, Pigeon - for a day's total of

Feathers



41 species.

Although the official club trip was over, we spent one more day birding, with a trip to Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island. The tour road around the refuge was closed because it was under construction, so we walked on a few of the paths, but saw very little. Other birders we encountered also remarked about how quiet it was and how few birds there were. Other than Great Egrets and White Ibis, the only other interesting birds we saw there were four Magnificent Frigatebirds flying overhead. We also stopped at the Sanibel Light-house, but there were so many dead fish washed up on shore, we could hardly walk the beach. It was quite disheartening and unpleasant seeing all those dead fish lying around, so we headed back to the hotel, stopping a few times along the way to check out gulls and shore-birds. In addition to the Frigatebirds, we tallied 12 more species on our brief outing that day.



The official bird list for the trip included 105 species, and is attached for your information.

American Bittern
American Coot
American Crow
American Goldfinch
American Kestrel
American Robin
Anhinga
Bald Eagle
Barred Owl
Belted Kingfisher
Black Vulture
Black-and-white Warbler
Black-bellied Plover
Black-crowned Night Heron
Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher
Blue-winged Teal
Boat-tailed Grackle
Brown Pelican
Brown-headed Cowbird
Brown-headed Nuthatch
Burrowing Owl
Carolina Wren
Cattle Egret
Common Grackle
Common Ground Dove

Common Moorhen
Common Snipe
Common Yellow-throat
Crested Caracara
Double-crested Cormorant
Downy Woodpecker
Eastern Bluebird
Eastern Meadowlark
Eastern Phoebe
Eastern Towhee
Eurasian Collared Dove
European Starling
Fish Crow
Florida Scrub Jay
Gloss Ibis
Grasshopper Sparrow
Gray Catbird
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Great-crested Flycatcher
Greater Yellow-legs
Green Heron
House Sparrow
House Wren
Killdeer
Laughing Gulls
Least Sandpiper
Lesser Yellow-legs
Limpkin
Little Blue Heron
Logger-head Shrike
Mottled Duck
Mourning Dove

Northern Cardinal
Northern Flicker
Northern Harrier
Northern Mockingbird
Osprey
Palm Warbler
Pie-billed Grebe
Pileated Woodpecker
Pine Warbler
Purple Gallinule
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Red-winged Blackbird
Ring-billed Gulls
Ringed Turtle Dove
Rock Dove
Roseate Spoonbill
Royal Tern
Ruddy Turnstone
Sanderling
Sandhill Crane
Sandwich Tern
Savannah Sparrow
Scissor-tailed Flycatcher
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Short-tailed Hawk
Snail Kite
Snowy Egret
Swamp Sparrow
Tree Swallow
Tri-colored Heron
Tufted Titmouse

Turkey Vulture
Western Kingbird
White Ibis
White Pelican
White-eyed Vireo
White-tailed Kite
White-winged Dove
Wild Turkey
Willet
Wood Stork
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Yellow-crowned Night Heron
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Yellow-throated Warbler



Program Reports

Denise Hackert-Stoner and Scott Stoner

Holiday party and Program

On the evening of December 3, 2001, HMBC members returned to Five Rivers for our annual Holiday party, Christmas Bird Count (CBC) recruitment and a fine program on migrant shorebirds. The title of Tom Lindsay's program was: "Full Moon and Empty Stomachs: Migratory Shorebirds" but for those who attended that night, it was more like "Full moon and full stomachs"!

Photographer Tom Lindsay took us to the perennial birding hotspot of southern New Jersey, for the northbound migration shorebirds that coincides with the peak of horseshoe crab eggs. The peak egg laying of this species along the Delaware Bayshore occurs with the high tides and full moon. Shorebirds time their major refueling stop on their northward migration to coincide with this abundance of food. Tom shared photographs of red knots, ruddy turnstones, sanderlings and semi-palmated sandpipers, which were being banded by an international team of researchers in May of 2000. Tom explained the techniques employed for netting a group of shorebirds, and the banding and data collection process. It was an interesting presentation that not only explained the association between the moon, tides, horseshoe crabs and shorebird, but gave us a sense of what it is like to be involved in such a banding operation.

Tom finished his talk with some slides from last summer's MAPS banding project, carried out by DEC staff over several weeks at Five Rivers, and assistance from others including HMBC members.

Thanks to Tom for his fine program, and to the many HMBC members who brought delicious desserts!

Atlantic Canada

More than 60 people turned out on a cold winter evening for Gregg Recer's program on Birding Atlantic Canada. The January program had been canceled due to snow and given last year's history, we were lucky to actually hold a winter program as scheduled! (Members are reminded that they can call the Colonie Library at 458-9274 if the weather appears questionable the evening of the program before to make sure it is not canceled.)

Gregg took us to the several provinces of eastern Canada, from Machias Seal Island in the Bay of Fundy to the lower edge of Labrador, a journey replete with sea-birds, quaint fishing villages, picturesque lighthouses and stunning coastal scenery. He concluded with a side trip to the Gaspé Peninsula in eastern Quebec.

Machias Seal Island, claimed by both the US and Canada and reachable by boat from both New Brunswick and Maine, is staffed by the Canadian Fish and Wildlife Service and home to large colonies of Arctic Terns and burrow-dwelling Atlantic Puffins, along with a few Razorbills. Blinds atop the rock jumble provide opportunities for viewing and photographing the activities of the puffins at intensely close range. Getting there can be interesting though; after an hour or so boat ride, one lands in a dinghy, then runs a gauntlet of dive-bombing Arctic Terns, defending their ground nests.

Moving up the Fundy coast of New Brunswick finds Fundy National Park, with decent scenery and an opportunity to walk along the ocean floor while the world's highest tides are out. These tides are so great because of the shape of the Bay of Fundy; the farther into the Bay one goes, the greater the tidal range. Beyond Fundy are the Hopewell Rocks, which are largely covered during high tide but exposed down to the ocean floor when it is low. A fascinating place to explore, but pay close attention to the tide tables! Farther into the bay one learns about not just tidal action, but the tidal bore as well; some rivers actually reverse direction on the incoming tide. One such place is the Minas Basin in Central Nova Scotia.

One can get to the "next" province, Nova Scotia by plane, by car from New Brunswick or via (car) ferry from Portland or Bar Harbor, Maine (to Yarmouth). The southern coast is scenic with many lighthouses; the area around Peggy's cove near Halifax contains a particular scenic light and fishing villages that appear little changed for decades.

The Northeast part of Nova Scotia is Cape Breton Island, which includes the Cabot Trail and Cape Breton Highlands National Park. The scenery is fantastic here, with steep rocky headlands along the shore, seabird colonies on offshore islands, and moose!

Feathers



From the tip of Nova Scotia one can take a car ferry to Newfoundland (New-fund-LAND with emphasis on the last syllable is the way they pronounce it); the short trip goes to Port aux Basques on the SW part of Newfoundland and last 5 to 6 hours; the long one goes to Argentia on the SE part of the island and takes about 14 hours. Newfoundland is large; the trans-Canada highway across it is about 600 miles. Gregg described mainly the western and northern sections, from Port Aux Basques up to the northern tip at St. Anthony including Gros Morne national park.

Gros Morne, about halfway up the western side, is a world heritage site, designated to protect primarily its geological features. It has rocks (known as peridotite) derived from the earth's mantle deep below the surface, and brought to the surface by the unusual process of abduction, where two tectonic plates have collided and the edge of one has been wrenched upwards raising the mantle rock to the surface. More commonly the reverse process (subduction) occurs and one plate edge is driven below the other. It also has fjords that are open to the sea as well as landlocked fjords. Cirques also demonstrate the glacial nature of this area.

Farther north is St. Anthony near the northern tip of Newfoundland' Great Northern Peninsula. Nearby is L'Anse aux Meadows, site of an early Viking Settlement. A nearby campsite contained the summering "winter" finches such as Common Redpolls and Pine Grosbeaks many of us have been looking for all winter season in Albany!

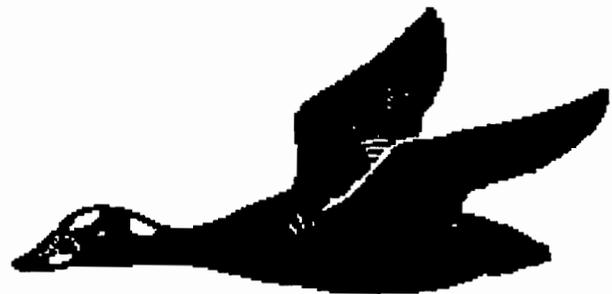
A short ferry trip across the Labrador Straits, and a few miles drive east brought them into the southern part of Labrador (emphasis on the "dor"). The landscape here is treeless sub-arctic tundra and the weather was cold, with rain and sleet. However, another interesting lighthouse is located at Pt Armour and Minke whales were visible swimming just offshore.

Gregg finished the program with a look at the eastern Gaspé Peninsula. The Gaspé Provincial Park in the interior (Chic-Choc Mountains) has breeding songbirds including a large variety of warblers such as Blackpoll, Tennessee, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue and Bay-Breasted.

At the tip of the Gaspé lies Bonaventure Island, home to tens of thousands of nesting Northern Gannets; a

boat ride followed by a hike across the island puts one at the edge of these vast colonies, replete with all the sounds and smells of a large active seabird population. Photographic opportunities abound!

We thank Gregg for sharing his excellent slides and personal knowledge of the birds, history and geology of this scenic and fascinating region.





Special Field Trip Announcements

SUNDAY, JULY 21 (ALL-DAY TRIP) EXPLORE CONSTITUTION MARSH SANCTUARY BY CANOE AND FOOT
(originally scheduled as July, TBA in your field trip schedule)

Join us on this joint field trip of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club and Capital Region Audubon to Constitution Marsh. This National Audubon Society sanctuary and Important Bird Area (IBA) is along the East side of the Hudson River in Putnam County. The canoe trip will be led by Sanctuary staff during the morning. Canoes are provided (we must use the Sanctuary's canoes). As we canoe the marsh, we will search for herons, bitterns, egrets, rails, waterfowl and marsh-dwelling songbirds. After lunch, we will (optionally) hike the rocky trail along the river in search of breeding woodland songbirds (sturdy footwear advised).

Important Logistical Issues: Parking is extremely limited; carpooling from the Capital Region is strongly advised. Constitution Marsh is approx. 2 1/2 hours from the Capital Region. Coordinators will assist with carpooling arrangements and provide directions and starting time. **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR THIS TRIP!** There is both a minimum and a maximum number of participants; last year we had to cancel because we did not meet the minimum. The sooner you call, the better chance you have of getting on the trip, and the better chance that the trip will "go." Call the Coordinators, Scott and Denise Stoner, at 785-6760 to sign up. The deadline for signing up is July 5, but all spaces might be taken by then.

- There is a fee of \$20/adult (\$15 Audubon member, senior and student) and \$8/child to participate. No children under 7 allowed. Participants must use the canoes provided and cannot bring their own canoes or kayaks. Maximum: 15 participants.

Also, look for an announcement in the next *Feathers* for details about a trip in late May or June to the Wilton Wildlife Preserve that is being added to the 2002 schedule!



Upcoming Programs

Please Note: All HMBC programs will be held at the Colonie Town Library at 7PM Except as Noted

**TUESDAY, April 2, HMBC Annual Meeting,
A Celebration of Bird Song.** Prof. Don Kroodsma, Dept. of Biology, Univ. of Massachusetts

The goal for this evening is to gain a new appreciation for listening to bird song. How a young songbird learns its songs, for example, is remarkably similar to how we learn to speak. And just listen to some of these song-learning songbirds! Time permitting, we'll think about chickadees, marsh wrens, catbirds and mockingbirds and thrashers, robins, chipping sparrows, tufted titmice, and perhaps take a brief trip to the tropics, to hear and see a most charismatic bird, the three-wattled bellbird, a bird that learns its songs but is not a true songbird.

Don Kroodsma has studied birdsong with, among others, Olin Sewall Pettingill, then director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Peter Marler at Rockefeller University in New York, on all aspects of bird song. His time since college has been spent reveling in the who, what, when, where, how, and why of bird song.

Join us for a great dinner and a unique and fascinating program!

Monday, April 29, 7:00 PM Third Annual HMBC Literary Night - Treats for Body and Soul. Mark your calendars and start thinking of what you will read at this year's event. As in the past members are invited to come and participate by reading a favorite original piece of writing or something by someone else that you enjoy. Members are also welcome to simply come and listen. Please also bring a dessert to share.

Monday, May 6, 7:00 PM at Five Rivers. Topic: **Breeding Bird Atlas**, speaker: Kim Hunsinger.

Project Coordinator Kim Corwin Hunsinger will provide an update on the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas project. Come and learn how to participate in the current atlas, and see interim distribution maps that show our progress with two years complete and three to go. Current Atlasers should bring their questions and stories of their experiences at-lasing.

Kim Hunsinger earned a BA in Biology from Hartwick College in 1991 and began working for DEC in 1991. She completed a MA in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from SUNY Albany in 1999. She was Project Coordinator for NYS Amphibian & Reptile Atlas Project prior to BBA.

Monday JUNE 3, 7:00 PM. Location: TBA **Collins Lake**. Speaker: Carl George.

Thurs Oct. 10, 7:00 PM, Colonie Library. Joint Audubon and HMBC program, Joan Morrison, Caracaras

Monday Sept. 9, 7 PM, Colonie library. Bill Gorman, movies on hummingbirds (rescheduled from Jan 02 due to snow)

Mon Nov 4, 7:00 PM Colonie Library. Alvah Sanborn, Sights and Sounds of a Southern Swamp.



Upcoming Field Trips

MAR 10 WATERFOWL OF THE HUDSON RIVER SOUTH (GREENE CO.)
SUN **Coordinator: Bill Cook** **851-2678**

Meet at 8 AM for this spring morning waterfowl trip. We will search the Hudson River from Coxsackie to Catskill where the waterfowl usually congregate on their way north. Expect to see Canvasbacks and Goldeneyes and many more. There is also a good chance to see Bald Eagle. Meet at the Coxsackie boat launch site. Take NYS Thruway to Exit 21B - Coxsackie, Route 9W south for about 2 miles, left (east) onto Rte 385 (Mansion St) and continue straight to the Hudson River where the road bears left into the boat launch site.

MAR 17 FORT MILLER / FORT EDWARD
SUN **Coordinator: Joyce Miller** **792-7861**

Join us as we search the Hudson for migrant waterfowl such as goldeneye, Bufflehead, mergansers and maybe a Bald Eagle; then on to Ft. Edward for late winter species like Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier and hopefully some Snow Buntings. Meet at 8:45 AM at the Schuylerville Central School, opposite the 50s Diner on Route 29. From the Northway Exit 14 follow signs for Rte 29 to Schuylerville.

MARCH 20 - RESERVATIONS DUE FOR BRADDOCK BAY/IRIQUOIS NWR (APRIL 6-7)

APRIL 6 — 7 BRADDOCK BAY & IROQUOIS NWR
SAT-SUN **Coordinators: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen** **899-2678**
Reservations by March 20

This weekend trip will focus on migrating raptors and waterfowl west of Rochester. The spring hawk-watch at Braddock Bay and adjacent Owl Woods provides an excellent location to study a wide variety of migrant raptors, including eagles and daytime roosting owls. Many Saw-whet Owls were found on this trip in 2000. Large numbers of migrant waterfowl including such specialties as Redhead will also be a feature of the trip at both Iroquois and shore areas along Lake Ontario. Call the Coordinators for reservations.

APR 13 VISCHER FERRY (morning)
SAT **Coordinator: Jeffrey Rose** **272-3998**

Join us for an early morning trip to observe early spring migrants including a good variety of ducks such as Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers, and hopefully some Rusty Blackbirds, Palm Warbler, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and our favorite, the Pileated Woodpecker. Meet at 8 AM at the main entrance. (See page 2 for directions)



APR 25
THUR

WOODCOCK AT FIVE RIVERS (evening)
Coordinator: Alan Mapes

439-4086

During a meandering walk to the Woodcock site, we will look for other early spring birds. Woodcock flight time is expected around 8:00 PM. Bring binoculars and flashlight. Meet at the Five Rivers Interpretive Building at 7 p.m. (See page 2 for directions.)

APR 27
SAT

BLACK CREEK MARSH (morning)
Coordinator: Larry Alden

861-6087

Join us for what is arguably the best marsh in the Capital District. We will be searching for American Bittern, Sora, Virginia Rail, Snipe, Wood Duck, Rusty Blackbirds, Bluebirds, Marsh Wren and early spring migrants. Meet at 7:30 AM on Hennessey Road near the RR tracks. From Voorheesville take Rte 156 to a right onto Koonz Rd to another right onto Hennessey Rd.

NOTE: 1) We will mostly be walking along roadsides; we cannot and will not walk on the railroad tracks; 2) Parking is limited and carpooling would be appreciated. The parking lot at the Voorheesville Elementary School (corner of Route 85A and 156, across from Smith's Tavern) is a convenient place. Persons able to carpool should meet there 15 minutes before the scheduled start time; 3) We may run into wet conditions if we venture into the woods off Meadowdale Road. Appropriate footwear is recommended.

APRIL 28
SUN

REIST SANCTUARY (morning)
Coordinator: Carl George

388-6330 (office, leave message) 393-0629 (home)
Best to contact Carl after April 13

In this 3-hour workshop we will explore the woodland habitat of the Club's own Reist Sanctuary in Niskayuna, learning the birds and discussing options for teaching young people about birds and birding. Meet at 8:00 AM at the (adjacent to the Sanctuary) office of the Society for the Protection of the Adirondacks (formerly the Schaeffer house) at 897 St. David's Lane, Niskayuna.



Audubon Society of the Capital Region — Upcoming Programs

Cap Reg Audubon meetings are held at the Colonie Library at 7:00 PM

Thurs. March 14, 7 PM, Colonie library. **Seabirds of the Aleutian Islands.** Lisa Meehan

Come experience life in one America's most remote areas - the Western Aleutian Islands of Alaska. Former Wildlife Biologist, Lisa Meehan, shares with us her day to day experiences in a summer field camp on Buldir Island. We will explore this small island which is a breeding ground for millions of elusive sea birds, including kittiwakes, murrelets, auklets, storm petrels and puffins.

April Program. **TBA**

Thurs May 9, 7 PM, Colonie library. **LOONS!** Nina Schoch of the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program

The Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program (ACLP) is a cooperative research and education effort studying the natural history of the Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) and the effects of contaminants and human interactions on loon populations in the Adirondack Park of New York State. The ACLP was initiated in the spring of 2001 to further expand the contaminant research project conducted by BioDiversity Research Institute and the Northeast Loon Study Workgroup in the Adirondack Park from 1998-2000. The ACLP is a partnership of the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks, the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, BioDiversity Research Institute, and the Audubon Society of New York, Inc. The Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program monitors the return rate and reproductive success of loons color-banded as part of the contaminant research. Contaminant sampling and banding of loons has continued in coordination with BioDiversity Research Institute. An index of the summer loon population in the Adirondack Park is obtained through an annual loon census. Education programs have been developed, including a citizen science website (www.adkscience.org/loons), school "Loon Scientist" programs, and presentations about loon natural history, contaminants, and human interactions with loons. The work of the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program is coordinated with other research projects studying loons and water quality throughout New York State and North America.

Thurs Sept. 12 Tom Lindsay, East Coast Refuges, 7 PM, library.

Thurs Oct. 10, 7PM, Library. Joan Morrison, Caracaras. Joint Audubon and HMBC program,

Feathers



HMBC BOARD FOR 2001-2002

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HMBC Contact Information

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

Email: contact@hmbc.net

HMBC website: <http://hmbc.net>

Reminder!!

All HMBC Board meetings are open to all Club members. Meetings are held at Five Rivers Center or other local venues at 7:00 PM, usually on the second Monday of odd-numbered months. Because of the holiday, the next board meeting will be **Monday, Jan. 14, 2002**. Contact Lynn Huntington for details.

photos, artwork to:

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

via e-mail to:



HMBC T-shirts For Sale

We are once again offering t-shirts for sale. Shirts are 100% pre-shrunk cotton, short-sleeve tees. Color is "sports grey" and the HMBC screech-owl logo will be printed on the front, upper left. Sizes M — XXL. Sizes tend to run somewhat narrow. The price is \$13.00 per shirt. Please fill out the form below to place your order, and mail to the address below by April 1, 2002. Shirts should be available by May 1, 2002. Thanks!!

Name _____
 Street _____
 City _____
 Zip _____
 Phone _____

**Mail Completed Order
Form with payment to:**

HMBC t-shirts
c/o Gregg Recer
23 Scotch Mist Way
Malta NY
12020

Please indicate # of each size:

M _____
 L _____
 XL _____
 XXL _____

Total due
(Total shirts x \$13.00/shirt) = \$ _____

**Make Checks payable to
"Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club"**



Feathers



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FEATHERS

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HMBC 2002 Annual Business Meeting & Sam Madison Award
By Gregg Recer

The HMBC 2002 Annual business meeting was held in Colonie on April 2, 2002. A new Board of Directors was elected, including Lynn Huntington for a 2nd term as President, Gregg Recer as Vice President, Dan Welch returning as Treasurer, David Martin returning as Secretary. Two Board members were elected to first terms — Linda Parr and Donna Zimmerman, and one Board member was elected to a 2nd term — Scott Stoner. Two Board members are in the middle of their terms — Joan Cipriani and Jackie Bogardus.

The other major piece of business was the awarding of the first annual Sam Madison award. The award was created to honor the memory of long-time Club member Sam Madison and is intended to support individuals or organizations to enhance environment-related education in young people. The inaugural Sam Madison award was presented to the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in recognition of the Center's long history of work in education with local youth.

After the business meeting, we were treated to an excellent presentation on birdsong biology by Don Kroodsma, Biology Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Look for a detailed program report in a future edition of *Feathers*.



Photo: Scott Stoner

Five Rivers Director, Craig Thompson (center) and Al Mapes (left), DEC environmental education director accept the inaugural HMBC Sam Madison Award. The award was presented on behalf of HMBC by Bob Budliger (right).

Dan Welch reported that the financial health of the Club was basically sound, although some concern was raised that there has been a small amount of membership erosion in recent years.

In This Issue....

Upcoming Field Trips

Upcoming Programs

Field Trip and Program Reports

Special Field Trip Announcements



Field Trip Reports

WATERFOWL OF THE HUDSON RIVER (GREENE CO)

The leader was "stingy this year." That's how one participant put it. There were very few waterfowl species on the river compared to last year. We did, however, see three **BALD EAGLES** and Bob Ramonowski added **FISH CROW** to his life list! The highlight for some people, including Gale Nord, was a pond full of croaking **WOOD FROGS**. The water surface was literally covered with frogs. A **BROWN CREEPER** was the highlight for another participant. After nothing but **MALLARDS, BLACK DUCKS AND COMMON MERGANSERS** Dutchman's Landing in Catskill was a treat. There we found **COMMON GOLDENEYE, GREATER SCAUP, BUFFLEHEAD** and two more eagles including an adult. Following the trip four people birded the river from the Columbia County side. Will Yandik took us to his Atlas block and pointed out a **BALD EAGLE** on a nest, an **EASTERN SCREECH-OWL** in a tree cavity and **GREEN-WINGED TEAL** in Hudson's North Bay.

— *Bill Cook*

Fort Miller/Fort Edward

Eleven birders enjoyed stunning scenery and brisk breezes during the St. Patrick's Day trip to Fort Miller and Fort Edward in Washington County. The day yielded 41 species, with many early-spring birds but no winter species.

Trolling along the dirt roads bordering the Hudson River in Fort Miller, we spotted **COMMON MERGANSERS**, several **HOODED MERGANSERS**, **RING-NECKED DUCKS**, **CANADA GEESE**, **BLACK DUCKS**, and only a handful of **GOLDENEYES**. Throughout the day, waves of **SNOW GEESE** flew over us, beautifully highlighted by the sun behind them. Another treat were good long looks at three singing male **BLUEBIRDS**, cobalt-blue in the sun. They were memorable life birds for at least one member of our group.

Along Town Line Road (between Argyle and Fort Edward towns) we stopped at the well-populated marsh halfway down the road for excellent views of several **NORTHERN PINTAIL, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, WOOD DUCKS**, as well as many **MALLARDS AND BLACK DUCKS**.

Many fields were polka-dotted with **ROBINS**: probably 300 total. Many of us spotted our first **TURKEY VULTURE AND KESTRELS** of the season. **SONG SPARROW, MOCKINGBIRD, CHIPPING SPARROW, GRACKLES, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS AND KILLDEER** were other signs of spring.

RED-TAILED HAWKS were fairly common. We had one quick glimpse of a female **NORTHERN HARRIER**. The short-eared owls, rough-legged hawks and other winter birds seem to have already departed.

Other species seen: **NORTHERN CARDINAL, WILD TURKEY, PROBABLE COOPER'S HAWK, ROCK DOVE, MOURNING DOVE, HAIRY & DOWNY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, RING-BILLED GULLS (HUNDREDS), BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, STARLING, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, TUFTED TITMOUSE, AMERICAN GOLD-FINCH, HOUSE FINCH, HOUSE SPARROW**.

— *Joyce Miller*

Braddock Bay/Iroquois NWR

Eleven HMBC members traveled to the Rochester NY area for a weekend of late-winter/early-spring birding. We woke Saturday morning to about 3 inches of lake-effect snow. It was fairly cold and windy on Saturday with conditions not conducive to a good spring hawk flight (winds were from the north). We focused on birding the Lake Ontario shore in the morning, moving to Iroquois NWR in the afternoon. Our first stop on Lake Ontario was a wind-blown spit that produced a **COMMON LOON, A HORNED GREBE** and a couple of **BONAPARTE'S GULLS**. The loon and Grebe were in nearly complete alternate plum-

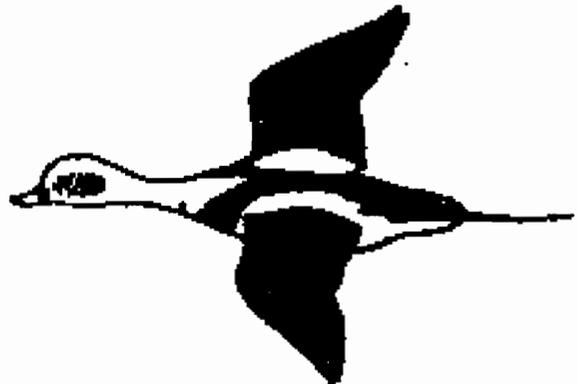


age, and the Bonies were beginning to show evidence of their hoods. Some of the best birding along the lake shore was had at Irondequoit Bay. A quiet backwater (out of the wind!) near the mouth of the Bay produced a good mix of ducks, including GADWALL, BLUE-WINGED TEAL, GREEN-WINGED TEAL AND HOODED AND RED-BREASTED MERGANSERS. **TREE SWALLOWS** were abundant and actively feeding over the water. We had a **BELTED KINGFISHER** fly over and a **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER** called from the woods on the opposite shore. We continued on to the Bay mouth and were rewarded with very close views of several dozen **LONG-TAILED DUCKS**. Males in nearly every stage of molt from complete basic to nearly complete alternate plumage were there for us to study at our leisure. As an added bonus, a male **SURF SCOTER** was present in the group of long-tails. **KILLDEER** ran along the grass verge next to the road. We continued west through Rochester and stopped briefly at Braddock Bay State Park. The hawk counters had moved near the visitor center to get out of the wind, since there really was not much to count that day. We had lunch and decided to proceed straight away to Iroquois NWR. A few **HORNED LARKS** gave a few of us a quick glimpse on the drive inland. Iroquois is a great area for waterfowl, with lots of different impoundments, each of which can hold a little different variety of birds. At our first stop, there was a group spending the day showing birds to visitors, and they had a forest of scopes and tripods set up. The top attraction was a pair nesting **BALD EAGLES** that were quite visible flying around the impoundment and sitting on the nest. A great variety of waterfowl was present including two **TUNDRA SWANS**, **NORTHERN SHOVELERS**, **NORTHERN PINTAILS** AND **RUDDY DUCKS**, in addition to most of the species seen earlier. We spent the rest of that day checking all the Iroquois pools, but didn't add much else that was new.

Sunday morning we proceeded straight to Braddock Bay. There was some indication that the winds would shift to the south and we might have some hawk movement. Braddock Bay Raptor Research runs the hawkwatch and also conducts weekly hawk and owl-prowl seminars on weekend mornings. We joined the owl prowl to begin the

day. The owl woods were cold and damp and search as we may, no owls were found. Staff at the banding station stated that it had been a very poor week for owls in the woods. We had a chance to see the banding station, but there was no activity while we were there. We returned to the Park and took some time at the hawk-watching platform. There was more of a crowd, and winds were southerly, but the temps stayed surprising low and what hawk action there was consisted mainly of very distant views of **RED-TAILED HAWKS** AND **TURKEY VULTURES**. A couple of very high-flying **SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS** were seen by a few of us. The trip broke up about noon on Sunday, with several participants stopping at Montezuma NWR on the return trip to add a few additional goodies including **REDHEAD** AND **CANVASBACK**. Raptor migration-watching is always a very weather-dependent activity, and the trip this year did not get much cooperation from the winds. Nevertheless, a nice variety of waterfowl and other birds was seen during the weekend, with a total species count for the trip of 66.

— Gregg Recer
— Cathy Graichen





4th Annual Bird Walk and Lecture hosted by the Land Trust of the Saratoga Region

Organization / Event Description:

The Land Trust of the Saratoga Region (LTSR) is a non-profit Land Trust dedicated to preserving open space throughout Saratoga County. Several years ago LTSR decided to highlight recent acquisitions by hosting a morning guided bird walk and brunch at selected properties. This year's Bird Walk will be held at the Hennig Preserve in the Town of Providence. This magnificent parcel includes wetlands, hemlock forest, small ponds and miles of trails. Frank Murphy and Barb Putnam will again act as guides for our hike. Immediately following the hike a catered brunch will be served.

For the first time an evening lecture has been added to the schedule of events. This year's lecture will feature Pete Nye from the NYS DEC Endangered Species Unit. Pete is a noted authority on the American Bald Eagle and will speak about this species and its resurgence throughout the State.

The funds raised from this event will be used by LTSR to support a variety of ongoing land protection projects.

Date/Times/Cost:

Lecture: Friday - May 10, 2002 (7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.) - \$15.00 (refreshments will be served)

Bird Walk / Brunch: Saturday - May 11, 2002 - \$35.00
6:30 a.m. - 7:00 a.m. (Coffee at Trailhead)
7:00 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. (Guided Bird Walk)
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. (Brunch)

* Please note that combination tickets for both the lecture and bird walk/brunch are available for \$40.00

Places:

Lecture: Saratoga Spa State Park - Administration Building - Gideon Putnam Room

Bird Walk: Hennig Preserve - Town of Providence, Saratoga County

*Please call LTSR Office for a map and written directions to the preserve (518-584-9934)

Additional Information:

For additional information and a written invitation please call Tim Schlachter, Director of Land Protection (518-584-9934)



Special Field Trip Announcements

SUNDAY, JULY 21 (ALL-DAY TRIP) EXPLORE CONSTITUTION MARSH SANCTUARY BY CANOE AND FOOT
(originally scheduled as July, TBA in your field trip schedule)

Join us on this joint field trip of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club and Capital Region Audubon to Constitution Marsh. This National Audubon Society sanctuary and Important Bird Area (IBA) is along the East side of the Hudson River in Putnam County. The canoe trip will be led by Sanctuary staff during the morning. Canoes are provided (we must use the Sanctuary's canoes). As we canoe the marsh, we will search for herons, bitterns, egrets, rails, waterfowl and marsh-dwelling songbirds. After lunch, we will (optionally) hike the rocky trail along the river in search of breeding woodland songbirds (sturdy footwear advised).

Important Logistical Issues: Parking is extremely limited; carpooling from the Capital Region is strongly advised. Constitution Marsh is approx. 2 1/2 hours from the Capital Region. Coordinators will assist with carpooling arrangements and provide directions and starting time. **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR THIS TRIP!** There is both a minimum and a maximum number of participants; last year we had to cancel because we did not meet the minimum. The sooner you call, the better chance you have of getting on the trip, and the better chance that the trip will "go." Call the Coordinators, Scott and Denise Stoner, at 785-6760 to sign up. The deadline for signing up is July 5, but all spaces might be taken by then.

- There is a fee of \$20/adult (\$15 Audubon member, senior and student) and \$8/child to participate. No children under 7 allowed. Participants must use the canoes provided and cannot bring their own canoes or kayaks. Maximum: 15 participants.

Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park field trip

A morning trip in late May or June will be arranged at the Wilton Wildlife Preserve in Wilton, Saratoga County. Complete details will be provided sometime in early May on Birdline (439-8080) and on the HMBC web site (hmbc.net).



Upcoming Programs

Please Note: The May & June HMBC programs will be held at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar. HMBC programs will return to the Colonie Town Library at 7PM starting in September. No HMBC programs are scheduled in July or August.

Monday, May 6, 7:00 PM at Five Rivers. Topic: **Breeding Bird Atlas**, speaker: Kim Hunsinger.

Project Coordinator Kim Corwin Hunsinger will provide an update on the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas project. Come and learn how to participate in the current atlas, and see interim distribution maps that show our progress with two years complete and three to go. Current Atlasers should bring their questions and stories of their experiences at-lasing.

Kim Hunsinger earned a BA in Biology from Hartwick College in 1991 and began working for DEC in 1991. She completed a MA in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from SUNY Albany in 1999. She was Project Coordinator for NYS Amphibian & Reptile Atlas Project prior to BBA.

Monday JUNE 3, 7:00 PM at Five Rivers. **Collins Lake**. Speaker: Carl George.

Monday Sept. 9, 7 PM, Colonie library. Bill Gorman, movies on hummingbirds (rescheduled from Jan 02 due to snow)

Thurs Oct. 10, 7:00 PM, Colonie Library. Joint Audubon and HMBC program, Joan Morrison, Caracaras

Mon Nov 4, 7:00 PM Colonie Library. Alvah Sanborn, Sights and Sounds of a Southern Swamp.

Audubon Society of the Capital Region — Upcoming Programs

Thurs May 9, 7 PM, Colonie library. **LOONS!** Nina Schoch of the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program

The Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program (ACLP) is a cooperative research and education effort studying the natural history of the Common Loon (*Gavia immer*) and the effects of contaminants and human interactions on loon populations in the Adirondack Park of New York State. The ACLP was initiated in the spring of 2001 to further expand the contaminant research project conducted by BioDiversity Research Institute and the Northeast Loon Study Workgroup in the Adirondack Park from 1998-2000. The ACLP is a partnership of the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Natural History Museum of the Adirondacks, the NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, BioDiversity Research Institute, and the Audubon Society of New York, Inc. The Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program monitors the return rate and reproductive success of loons color-banded as part of the contaminant research. Contaminant sampling and banding of loons has continued in coordination with BioDiversity Research Institute. An index of the summer loon population in the Adirondack Park is obtained through an annual loon census. Education programs have been developed, including a citizen science website (www.adkscience.org/loons), school "Loon Scientist" programs, and presentations about loon natural history, contaminants, and human interactions with loons. The work of the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program is coordinated with other research projects studying loons and water quality throughout New York State and North America.

Thurs Sept. 12 Tom Lindsay, East Coast Refuges, 7 PM, library.

Thurs Oct. 10, 7PM, Library. Joan Morrison, Caracaras. Joint Audubon and HMBC program,



Upcoming Field Trips

MAY 5
SUN

MILL CREEK MARSH (SWYER PRESERVE) (morning)
Coordinator: Arthur Long

758-9283

We will explore this lovely Nature Conservancy property along Mill Creek at the edge of the Hudson River in Columbia County. We will walk the half-mile boardwalk through the freshwater tidal swamp looking for migrant and arriving breeding songbirds and waterbirds; we might get distracted by the plants as well! Likely bird species include Pileated and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Marsh Wren, Veery, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, Scarlet Tanager and Baltimore Oriole; less likely but possible are Common Moorhen, Virginia Rail, both Cuckoos and both Waterthrushes. Parking is extremely limited so we will need to carpool. Meet at 7:00 AM at the K-Mart parking lot in East Greenbush, on the right (south) side of routes 9 and 20, about 1.7 miles east of the Dunn Memorial Bridge.

MAY 7
TUE

ALBANY PINE BUSH — LAKE RENNELAER (evening)
Coordinator: Donna Zimmerman

869-6624

We will be exploring a wooded trail along the western end of Lake Rensselaer, looking for migrant warblers as well as breeding residents and raptors. A previous trip here by the Thursday morning birding group yielded 47 species, including several warbler species, ducks, osprey and solitary sandpiper. Mobbing crows and blue jays also alerted us to the location of two immature Great Horned Owls. Meet at 6 PM at the "Village of Colonie Nature Trails" parking lot on the east side of Rapp Rd., north of Washington Ave. Extension.

MAY 11
SAT

BIRDS AND BREAKFAST AT FIVE RIVERS (morning)
Coordinator: Denise Hackert-Stoner

785-6760

Our annual celebration of the arrival of spring will be held at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center on Game Farm Road in Delmar. The Center has an excellent trail system through a variety of habitats. You can expect to see and hear a number of resident species and migrants, including Canada Geese with their newly hatched goslings, Eastern Bluebirds feeding their young, and (hopefully) a number of different warblers. The Interpretive Building (visitor center) will be open, with coffee flowing, from 6:45 a.m. Birding groups will leave from there at 7:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. You may join one of these groups, or come earlier and go out on your own, as we try to find as many species as possible. We'll rally at 10:30 a.m. for coffee, doughnuts, bagels, fresh fruit (approx. \$3.00 donation) and a list compilation. (See page 2 for directions.)

MAY 12
SUN

VISCHER FERRY MIGRANTS (morning)
Coordinators: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen

899-2678

Timed for the peak of spring migration, this is one of the Club's most popular trips. We will explore this varied site for warblers and other songbirds, as well as marsh species including rails and bitterns. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Main Entrance (See page 2 for directions.)



MAY 16
THURS

ANN LEE POND (evening)
Coordinators: Philip and Marjorie Whitney

477-9050

This evening walk at the peak of spring migration should produce a variety of transient warblers, vireos, thrushes and flycatchers in addition to many resident species. Meet at 6 PM at the parking area on Route 155, at the North end of the pond near the intersection with Albany Shaker Road (approximately across 155 from Heritage Park stadium).

MAY 18
SAT

CENTURY RUN (all day !)
Compiler: Bob Yunick
1527 Myron St.
Schenectady, NY 12309

377-0146

See how many species you can find in 24 hours in the 11-county Hudson-Mohawk Region. Join a group or form your own and cover all your favorite locations. Each group must stay together and jointly identify species reported. Reports must be mailed to the compiler by May 31 in order to be counted. Also, please call Birdline with the total species and highlights for your group.

JUNE 1
SAT

MOREAU LAKE STATE PARK
Coordinator: Jennifer Brady-Connor

581-8375

This will be an early morning walk around Moreau Lake situated in northeast Saratoga County. Expect to see and hear a number of resident species and migrants including vireos, sparrows, warblers, and wading birds. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the beach parking lot of the Park, located on Saratoga Road south of Route 9 and northway Exit 17. There is a \$5.00 entrance fee charged by the park.

JUNE 2
SUN

BIRDING BY EAR — THACHER STATE PARK
Coordinator: Bob Budliger

439-0006

Come spend the morning with us searching for the breeding birds of this local park. We will focus on learning to identify the songs of the numerous species of flycatchers, thrushes, vireos, warblers and other passerines present in the park and sharpening the skills needed to separate species by ear. We will meet at 7:00 AM. Call the coordinator ahead of time for meeting-place details.

JUNE 6 - RESERVATIONS DUE FOR CARTER POND BY CANOE (JUNE 8)

JUNE 8
SAT

CARTER POND BY CONOE (evening)
Coordinators: Scott and Denise Stoner
Reservations by June 6.

785-6760

Carter Pond in Washington County is home to breeding waterfowl and passerines; bitterns are not out of the question. This wildlife management area is best explored by canoe. We will spend the late afternoon and early evening paddling both the North and south marshes; bring a picnic supper to eat in your canoe if you wish. Meet at 4:00 PM with your canoe at the North parking area. Please call the coordinators for directions and reservations.



JUNE 11
TUE

HUDSON RIVER - BIRDS AND BOATS (evening)
Coordinator: Al Mapes

439-4086

Bring your canoe or kayak for an evening of birding by boat on the Hudson River. We will launch at 6:00 PM on the river south of Albany, exploring quiet bays and side channels and marshes. Bald Eagle is commonly seen in this area, along with Great Blue Heron and waterfowl. Songbirds, woodpeckers and others should be heard and seen along the forested shores. PFD's must be worn; bring an extra paddle and a flashlight for safety. This is an easy paddle, but it is not for rank beginners. Call the coordinator to register and for directions to put-in.

JUNE 13
THU

*FIVE RIVERS — INSTRUCTIONAL TRIP (evening)
Coordinators: Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

785-6760

After spring migration, Five Rivers is a great place to learn some of the songbirds that remain to breed. Song activity remains high but the number of species is reduced, allowing us to focus on seeing some of the commoner birds well. We'll take a relaxed walk in the woods and along the ponds, stopping to identify by song and sight some of Five Rivers' breeding birds. Meet in front of the Interpretive Building (visitor center) at 6:00 PM.

JUNE 15
SAT

WILSON POWELL SANCTUARY (morning)
Coordinator: Jackie Bogardus

283-6603

On this morning trip we will search for resident and breeding species of this Columbia County preserve. We'll explore the Sanctuary's diverse habitats, finishing our walk at the rock ledges overlooking the Hudson River Valley. Our previous recent trips to the Sanctuary have been in fall, so we will get a different perspective on the bird life here. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the small parking area on Rt. 9 about a mile south of Exit 12 of I-90. Bring a snack or lunch as we expect to be at the Sanctuary until at least noon.

JUNE 16
SUN

SARATOGA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK (BATTLEFIELD) (morning)
Coordinators: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen

899-2678

This morning visit to the Saratoga Battlefield will begin with a walk in the area of the Visitor Center. We will then drive the tour road through the Park hoping to see Golden-winged Warbler, many of the Park's sparrows including Savannah, Field, Song and possibly Grasshopper (Henslow's has recently been absent, but who knows?) as well as many other grassland breeding species. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the flagpole in the Visitor Center parking lot. A small entrance fee is required.

JUNE 22
SAT

SCHODACK (CASTLETON) ISLAND STATE PARK (morning)
Coordinator: Ray Perry

399-3962

Join us on this morning trip into this State Park that should be officially designated a Bird Conservation Area by the time of the trip. Schodack Island is the only reliable location in the Capital Region for breeding Cerulean Warblers. Several other breeding species including Bald Eagle, Great Blue Heron, Red-bellied Woodpecker and Carolina Wren should also be found on this trip. Call the coordinator for meeting time and place.



JUNE 29 A DAY OF BREEDING-BIRD ATLASING (full day)
SAT **Coordinator: Laura Sommers**

756-8346

The second New York State Breeding Bird Atlas is in full swing and this trip will give participants an opportunity to help contribute data on an atlas block in southern Albany or northern Greene County. Of course, the focus will be on finding breeding species, but this trip will also provide some insight into how atlasing is done and the significance of this sort of data collection by birders. Contact the coordinator ahead of time for directions and meeting time.

JUNE 30 DYKEN POND (morning)
SUN **Coordinator: Jackie Bogardus**

283-6603

Dyken Pond Environmental Education Center is situated on the Rensselaer Plateau where the towns of Grafton, Poestenkill and Berlin meet. At an elevation of 1600 to 1800 feet, the area includes a wide variety of habitats and offers birders a great opportunity to quietly and leisurely enjoy the outdoors. The Center has over six miles of trails that are well marked and relatively easy to traverse. Join us for this morning walk where we hope to see a great variety of resident and nesting species. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Tamarac School on State Route 2 in Cropseyville.

JULY 1 - ***RESERVATIONS DUE FOR CAPE MAY — SEPT 20—22 *******

Program Reports

Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park March 2002

On March 4 a large and interested crowd turned out to hear Sarah Clarkin, Director of the new Wilton Wildlife Preserve and Park (Wilton preserve) in Saratoga County. The Town of Wilton is growing rapidly and it is heartening to see that they also have a strong commitment to preserving a large expanse of open space; land that is similar (but not exactly like) the Albany Pine Bush. The Wilton preserve is now at 1,300 acres with 10 miles of marked trails; it is somewhat fragmented at present but the goal is to protect 3,000 acres. Like the Albany pine bush, it is home to the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly. Wilton preserve represents a partnership between the Town of Wilton, the Nature Conservancy and the NYS DEC.

This is an exciting new natural preserve in our area and we look forward to visiting it. Look for a special field trip there in late spring or early summer, and for it to become a regular destination on the HMBC schedule. In the meantime, if you want more information, visit www.townofwilton.com or email Sarah at sclarkin@tnc.org.



HMBC BOARD FOR 2002-2003

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President: Lynn Huntington 329 N. Schodack Rd East Greenbush, N. Y. 12061 477-2980	Vice-President: Gregg Recer 23 Scotch Mist Way Malta, NY 12020 899-2678
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HMBC Contact Information

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

Email: contact@hmbc.net

HMBC website: <http://hmbc.net>

Reminder!!

All HMBC Board meetings are open to all Club members. Meetings are held at Five Rivers Center or other local venues at 7:00 PM, usually on the second Monday of odd-numbered months. The next Board meeting will be on May 13th. Contact Lynn Huntington for location details.

photos, artwork to:

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

via e-mail to:

Feathers



FEATHERS
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2002

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Yard List
By Bill Gorman

Most birders keep lists. They have life lists, world lists, US Lists, ABA Lists, lower 48 states lists, state lists, county lists, area lists, yard lists, year lists, big day lists, etc.

When I moved into my present home (an area of ~5.5 acres of wooded hillside) in East Greenbush in 1962, I started a yard list. My criteria for this list were birds seen on or from my yard including fly-overs. I am not an ardent record keeper and with a family to raise I sometimes recorded exact dates and sometimes only the months of sightings. I kept my records in an old notebook in a somewhat rambling fashion and recently decided to compile these records into a readable format. Since this list appears relevant to the status of our local bird populations, I thought it might be of interest to others. See attached Table 1 - East Greenbush Yard List.

While it may not be too unusual to see 141 birds from one yard, it might be surprising to see that at least 47 different species (!) have nested in this relatively small area over the past 40 years. Most interesting, however, are the changes in the bird populations that have occurred over this time period. See Table 2 - Changes in Bird Presence in an East Greenbush Yard.

While these changes are somewhat obvious, others also probably have taken place. Since the yard itself has not changed drastically, these changes are probably due to changes

in the neighboring areas or to changes in the birds' migratory patterns. Although the reasons for the changes in bird presence in this area are speculative, I hope this yard list gives some prospective to our local bird population over the past 40 years.



In This Issue....

*Upcoming Field Trips
and Programs*

Field Trip and Program Reports

Hot Line Info (West Nile Virus)

Birding Skills Evaluation

Birding 101 Final Exam

Feathers



Table 1—East Greenbush Yard List (1962-2002)

Species Observed (* nested)	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Great Blue Heron					X			X		X		
Green Heron						X	X	X				
Black-crowned Night Heron								X				
Snow Goose	X										X	
Canada Goose	X	X	X	X						X	X	X
Wood Duck				X				X	X			
Mallard				X	X							
American Black Duck			X		X		X					
Common Merganser			X									
Turkey Vulture	X				X						X	
Osprey									X			
Bald Eagle						X						
Sharp-shinned Hawk	X			X	X							X
Cooper's Hawk	X	X										X
Northern Goshawk										X		X
Red-shouldered Hawk				X	X							
Broad-winged Hawk*				X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Red-tailed Hawk*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
American Kestrel				X								X
Ring-necked Pheasant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
Ruffed Grouse*	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Wild Turkey*	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
Killdeer		X		X	X			X	X			
Solitary Sandpiper					X				X			
American Woodcock				X	X			X				
Herring Gull									X	X		X
Ring-billed Gull	X	X	X							X	X	X
Great Black-backed Gull										X		
Rock Dove	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mourning Dove*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Black-billed Cuckoo					X	X		X				
Yellow-billed Cuckoo					X			X				

Feathers



Species Observed (* nested)	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
House Wren*				X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Winter Wren	X			X						X		X
Golden-crowned Kinglet	X	X	X	X						X	X	X
Ruby-crowned Kinglet				X	X				X	X	X	
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher					X							
Eastern Bluebird				X								
Veery					X	X	X					
Bicknell's Thrush						X						
Swainson's Thrush					X				X	X		
Hermit Thrush			X	X						X	X	X
Wood Thrush*			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
American Robin*	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Gray Catbird*					X	X	X	X	X	X		
Northern Mockingbird					X							X
Brown Thrasher*			X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Cedar Waxwing*			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
European Starling	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Blue-headed Vireo					X				X	X		
Yellow-throated Vireo					X					X		
Warbling Vireo					X	X						
Philadelphia Vireo									X			
Red-eyed Vireo*					X	X	X	X	X			
Blue-winged Warbler					X							
Golden-winged Warbler					X			X				
Tennessee Warbler					X	X						
Northern Parula					X				X			
Yellow Warbler					X	X						
Nashville Warbler					X				X	X		
Chestnut-sided Warbler					X	X	X		X			
Magnolia Warbler					X				X			
Cape May Warbler					X							
Black-throated Blue Warbler					X							

Feathers



Species Observed (* nested)	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Common Grackle*			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Brown-headed Cowbird*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Baltimore Oriole*					X	X	X	X	X			
Pine Grosbeak											X	X
Purple Finch	X	X	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
House Finch*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Red Crossbill						X						
Common Redpoll	X	X	X	X							X	X
Hoary Redpoll												X
Pine Siskin	X	X	X	X	X							X
American Goldfinch*	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Evening Grosbeak	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X
House Sparrow	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Sent in by Pat Palmer—from an Elder Hostel trip in Texas.

Port Aransas Standardized Birding Skills Evaluation

Performance Factor	Far Exceeds Norm	Exceeds Norm	Meets Norm	Needs Some Improvement	Does Not Meet Minimal Standards
Pursuit Ability	Leaps trees with a single bound	Needs running start to leap trees	Can leap large bushes	Crashes into bushes trying to leap over	Catches poison ivy
Locating Birds in Binoculars	Faster than a Peregrine Falcon	Fast as a Chimney Swift	Not quite as fast as a Chimney Swift	Would you believe a slow Chimney Swift?	Has trouble locating chimneys
Field Work	Walks on water consistently	Walks on water in emergencies	Needs log to get over water	Drinks water	Spills water
Credibility	Talks with God	Talks with Roger Tory Peterson	Talks to himself	Argues with himself	Loses arguments
Sight Identification	Eyes of an Eagle	Eyes of Blue Jay	Needs binoculars	Needs binoculars and good light	Can't find binoculars
Sound Identification	Can recognize birds from a single chirp	Can recognize birds by song	Can identify some birds by song	Can hear songs	Eh?



Feathers

Table 2—Changes in Bird Presence in an East Greenbush Yard

Species	Early Status	Present Status
Broad-winged Hawk	nested	seldom seen
Ring-necked Pheasant	frequent	absent
Ruffed Grouse	nested	hard to find
Wild Turkey	absent	reasonably common
Red-bellied Woodpecker	absent	reasonably common
Eastern Kingbird	nested	seldom seen
Brown Thrasher	nested	seldom seen
Veery	reasonably common	seldom seen
Red-eyed Vireo	nested	seldom seen
American Redstart	nested	seldom seen
Ovenbird	nested	seldom seen
Louisiana Waterthrush	nested	seldom seen
Misc. Warblers	frequent	hard to find
Indigo Bunting	reasonably common	seldom seen
Eastern Towhee	nested	seldom seen
Field Sparrow	reasonably common	seldom seen
Purple Finch	reasonably common	uncommon
House Finch	absent	frequent
Pine Siskin	frequent visitor	uncommon
Evening Grosbeak	frequent visitor	uncommon

Feathers



Birding 101
Final Exam
Professor Ray Little

Sent in by Pat Palmer—from an Elder Hostel trip in Texas.

What bird ...

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | Is an outfielder? |
| 2. | Is where gardeners plant extra seeds? |
| 3. | Is what thieves are doing? |
| 4. | Is a coward from the great plains? |
| 5. | Is a regal angler? |
| 6. | Is a dismembered skeleton? |
| 7. | Is a sad letter? |
| 8. | Is a short conversation? |
| 9. | Is very very fast? |
| 10. | Is crazy? (2 possible answers) |
| 11. | Is a pennant? |
| 12. | Is all tied up? |
| 13. | Is a highway sprinter? |
| 14. | Sees with precious metal? |
| 15. | Must precede digestion? |
| 16. | Might give milk? |
| 17. | Murders a game animal? |
| 18. | Cuts through water? |
| 19. | Is a famous magician? |
| 20. | Is a country? |
| 21. | Is what the old locomotive is doing? |



Feathers

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 22. | Is a decay of pears? |
| 23. | Shoots from ambush? |
| 24. | Is an invoice for silverware? |
| 25. | Is a lame relative? |
| 26. | Is a construction machine? |
| 27. | Is a sleepless cat? |
| 28. | Is a heavenly punster? |
| 29. | Is an aged Indian? |
| 30. | Is a runt? |
| 31. | Would help with an oil spill? |
| 32. | Is a former vice president? |
| 33. | Is a German hunter? |
| 34. | Is a cowardly singer? |
| 35. | Is a tethered flier? |
| 36. | Is the most gentle curve in the road? |
| 37. | Is a tiny monarch? |
| 38. | Is a fence bar? |
| 39. | Would beat a destitute man? |
| 40. | Is a nocturnal windstorm? |
| 41. | Is a rock mover? |
| 42. | Is covered by a tarp? |
| 43. | Has 144 bills? |
| 44. | Helps elect the Pope? |

45. TRUE or FALSE. There is a large population of seagulls on Mustang Island.



Field Trip Reports

Woodcock Walk Five Rivers Center 25 April 2002

Trip Leader: Craig Thompson
Weather: a cold rain had just ended; air calm, humid, seasonably cool; intermittent sunshine
HMBC Participants: 3
Time Out: 7:00pm
Time In: 8:45pm

Birders Bag Bogsucker Limit

They're calling it the best celestial display in 30 years. **AMERICAN WOODCOCK**, that is, not the planetary alignment. For over 25 years at 5 Rivers, you could count on a woodcock here, a woodcock there, spread discretely throughout the far flung singing grounds at the Environmental Education Center, as if territory had quite amicably been decided by gentleman's agreement. But tonight, the birds, at least 2 and quite possibly 3, rather than singing soliloquies on separate stages, were launching from the same turf, often vaulting the heavens simultaneously in an exceptional battle of the bog-suckers. Time after time, even despite a short episode of light rain, one bird's wings would start cutting

the air into twitters, while another bird's spiraling flight would be climaxing with the sweet kisses of courtship, all directly overhead, an absolutely stunning spectacle for even the most practiced birder. On at least 3 occasions, a low flying woodcock strafed its peenting rival(s?) in the rarely witnessed "yakkety-yakkety-yakkety" territorial display, a fruitless gambit that only seemed to incite more ardent competition.

Specialties seen during the field trip's "preamble" included a pair of **BELTED KINGFISHERS** rattling about Goose Pond, 3 **AMERICAN KESTRELS** perched together atop a succession of spruce trees, and an **EASTERN BLUEBIRD**. Also seen were: **MOURNING DOVE**, **AMERICAN ROBIN**, **KILLDEER**, **FIELD SPARROW**, **SONG SPARROW**, **COMMON GRACKLE**, **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD**, **CANADA GOOSE**, **WOOD DUCK** and **NORTHERN CARDINAL**.

What appeared, for the all-day rain, to be a quite unpromising evening prospect ended, to our surprise and genuine delight, with an unforgettable avian sing-down, with the very stars as our campfire.

- Craig Thompson



Black Creek Marsh 27 April 2002

A dozen birders braved the early spring wind and cold temperatures, but clear skies, to seek out some of the specialties of Black Creek Marsh State Wildlife Management Area in southern Guilderland, Albany County. Cool weather the previous week seemed to halt the northward migration hastened by record high temperatures the week



before that, while temperatures in the 30s and 40s during the trip seemed to keep activity down for the day. Many of the trip's 40 species were heard-only birds, including some which are usually quite active and visible.

Since there are no trails to speak of at the marsh, most of the group's birding was along Hennessey and Meadowdale Roads. Birds near the railroad tracks on Hennessey included the ubiquitous **CANADA GEESE**, and several flyover **WOOD DUCKS**, plus a pair of **MALLARDS** for variety. A **PURPLE FINCH** sang, but could not be located. A male **NORTHERN HARRIER** ("Gray Ghost") put in a brief appearance over the western marsh, and the **TREE SWALLOWS** were busy checking out the potential nest holes in the dead trees by the road. A walk up the road to a weedy field found a singing **FIELD SPARROW** and a beautiful azure **EASTERN BLUEBIRD**. Heading back down to the tracks gave us a very brief **AMERICAN BITTERN** calling and a more satisfying listen to a **VIRGINIA RAIL** or rails.

After we car-pooled over to Meadowdale Road, the wind had died down a little and we took a short walk into the woods via a road-to-nowhere to get **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS**, **HOUSE WREN**, and **EASTERN PHOEBES**. Continuing down Meadowdale gave nice views of **AMERICAN KESTREL** patrolling the fields. East of Meadowdale Road, we took a short walk into a large open field which had been recently purchased by New York State, and flushed up a **COMMON SNIPE**. A small wetland there gave us singing **SWAMP SPARROWS** and another calling Virginia Rail. From there we had an unobstructed view of the Helderberg Escarpment, and a small speck materialized into a migrating **BROAD-WINGED HAWK**. An **OSPREY** also flew over and gave the party a good look as a snipe displayed nearby.

All in all, it was a relatively quiet morning, with little bird activity. As with last year's trip, there were no warblers to be found, but some of the wetland and grassland species made brief appearances (or piped up enough to be counted).

Species counted: **AMERICAN BITTERN, CANADA GOOSE, WOOD DUCK, MALLARD, TURKEY VULTURE, OSPREY, NORTHERN HARRIER, BROAD-WINGED HAWK, RED-TAILED HAWK, AMERICAN KESTREL, VIRGINIA RAIL, COMMON SNIPE, MOURNING DOVE, YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, DOWNY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, EASTERN PHOEBE, TREE SWALLOW, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, HOUSE WREN, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, EASTERN BLUEBIRD, AMERICAN ROBIN, NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD, EUROPEAN STARLING, NORTHERN CARDINAL, FIELD SPARROW, SONG SPARROW, SWAMP SPARROW, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, EASTERN MEADOWLARK, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, PURPLE FINCH, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, HOUSE SPARROW.**

- Larry Alden

Reist Sanctuary 28 April 2002

A Study Session at the Reist Sanctuary, Niskayuna, Schenectady Co.

0800-1030h, Sunday, April, 28, 2002

Overcast with light rain, air temperature in the 40s F.; air movement negligible.

The visit began with a brainstorming session conducted in the Center for the Forest Preserve at 897 St. David's Lane - Bill Lee, Kurt Weiskotten and Carl George participating.

Feathers



Given the plans of the Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks (AfPA) and the Adirondack Research Library to develop the home of the late Paul Schaefer into their headquarters, the objective of the discussion was the generation of a list of ideas on how the Club might coordinate with AfPA in the care and management of the Reist Sanctuary. The following ideas were proposed: use of the Center for meetings of the Club; use of the Center's parking area by birders while visiting the Sanctuary; joint hosting of school programs including those of the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center of Delmar; joint hosting of regular seminars and lectures dealing with natural history; joint maintenance of a feeding station on the grounds of the Center; development of trail guides; performance of various surveys directed toward defining the biota; evaluation of teaching and research proposals submitted by regional educators and researchers; consideration of joint programs for the various natural areas of the region; joint effort on the maintenance of trails, signage and bridges; development of a history of the sanctuary; development of the Adirondack Research Library as a repository for Club materials; cooperation on the content of web pages; cooperative interaction with the residents fronting on the Sanctuary or living near the Center; development of audio tutorials for the Sanctuary and, joint consideration of policy on the matter of invasive species.

After brainstorming, the Sanctuary was visited - entering from the back yard of the Center. The vernal pools scattered throughout the Sanctuary were well watered and lush with Skunk Cabbage and flowering Marsh Marigold. The surrounding forest was only beginning to leaf out, much cloud light flooding the more fully foliated understory dominated by exotic Honeysuckle. Mandrake, Canada May Flower and various ferns - all swelling into

full stature. In spite of the recent drought the small streams were flowing well and waterproof shoes and boots were highly appropriate. Biting insects were still slumbering and of no concern.

Birding was lean. The three keen observers found fourteen species during one and one-half hours of observation while walking about two miles of trail; **MOURNING DOVE** and **REDBELLIED WOODPECKER** were heard; a single **DOWNY WOODPECKER**, **BLUE-HEADED VIREO**, **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET** and **AMERICAN ROBIN** were seen; **BLUE JAY**, **AMERICAN CROW**, **BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE**, **TUFTED TITMOUSE**, **WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH** and **NORTHERN CARDINAL** were heard and seen; a loose flock of some twenty **YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER** as seen in the tree crowns along a more open sector of the "Hidden River Trail" was the highlight of the morning. A group of five or six **WHITE-THROATED SPARROW** provided a pleasant concluding touch.

Visit the Reist Sanctuary. The trails are in fine condition and graciously open and inviting.

- Carl George

Mill Creek Marsh 5 May 2002

Fifteen birders, some who were recognized HMBC members but none who would accept a membership brochure, walked the board walk in Mill Creek Marsh for close to three hours on a sunny, mild, windless morning of May 5. Entering the preserve, we were greeted at once by the distant, husky song of a **SCARLET TANAGER**, and then shortly by the sweet trill of a **SWAMP SPARROW**. Actually, however, these were not the first birds we identified. As we walked the road edge leading to the board walk, a large bird, very dark



Feathers

V64N3
Page 41

in its mid-section and remarkably light on head and tail (owing to some quirk of illumination) flew past, causing someone to yell, "BALD EAGLE!". The embarrassed trip leader was deceived for 2 to 3 seconds, as were several others, before everyone realized that we had a **GREAT BLUE HERON**. (Yes, I know, how could such an absurd error have been made?)

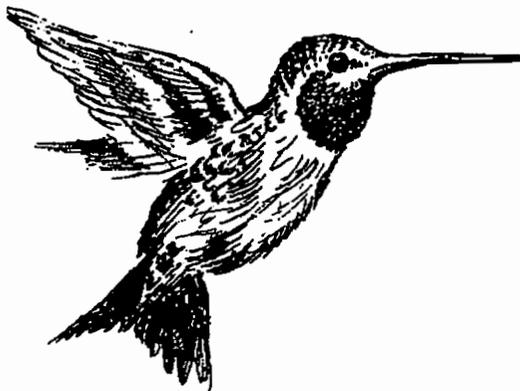
A **LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH** attracted our attention with its 3 clear, whistled introductory notes. **BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES** foraged and cavorted about us, while **SONG SPAR-**

look at perched **BALD EAGLES** (1 adult, 1 immature) across the river. One or the other would occasionally sally forth, to circle about a bit, thereby adding interest to the scene.

I am greatly indebted to Scott Stoner for carrying the 'scope all the way in, and to Tom Phillips for taking it back out. Moreover, Scott lent us his bird expertise, while Tom lent his wildflower expertise. (Quite a few took time to admire the wildflowers.)

All in all, we identified 36 species, and nearly everyone seemed to have a pleasant time.

- Arthur Long



ROWS popped up everywhere and sang incessantly. **YELLOW WARBLERS** sang "Sweet, sweet, sweet", **RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS** went, "Konk-la-ree", and a **GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER** whistled "Hreeep!". With 15 people strung out along the trail, it was a bit difficult to make sure that the foremost ones and the middle ones and the rear ones all saw (or heard) the bird of the moment. Thus it was that only 6 or 8 of us saw the **BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER** high in the treetops, and probably still fewer caught the elusive **BROWN CREEPER**.

Out at the observation tower where we set up the 'scope, everyone had at least one good

Birds and Breakfast 11 May 2002

Although a bit on the cool side, May 11 was sunny and pleasant, a very hospitable day for the thirty or so birders who enjoyed HMBC's annual Birds and Breakfast at Five Rivers. After enjoying the many feeder birds (including **WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS** and two very active **RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS**) and fortifying ourselves with lots of fresh coffee, two 7 AM groups set out with Bob Budliger and Jocelyn Cole-Calkins. Gregg Recer, Cathy Graichen and Bryce Recer led the 8 AM outing.

Both groups were treated to good numbers of birds, both spring migrants and breeders. Some highlights of the day included Doug Steele's sighting of six **DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS** flying over, a rare sight at Five Rivers. Also **EXCITING** were the great look at an **OSPREY** flying overhead with its catch of the day, **SCARLET TANAGER** and a few warbler species, including **BLACK-THROATED GREEN**,



Feathers

V64N3
Page 43

Bird Limericks

by Al Palmer

It's true, all the Anis are proud.
They are also gregarious and loud!
If they didn't have that nose;
They'd be common—as Crows!
And would never stand out in a crowd.

The Bluebird's sweet song, we have heard;
They're our colorful New York State bird.
First choice they have been,
Since I can't tell you when;
But replace them? How totally absurd!

It's a pleasure, each time I see,
How they flit all around, close to me.
They sure brighten our days,
With their cute little ways,
As they sing, 'Chickadee-dee-dee-dee.

There once was a bird named Dovekie,
Who spends all of his days far at sea.
His life would change, you can bet,
In a Fisherman's net,
Because canned like a Tuna, he'd be!!

His name states he's bald, but he's not.
There are feathers of white on his top!
To imply that he's bald,
Doesn't make sense at all!
So I hope that impression will stop!

Years ago, they just never could win;
When pesticides, we all used, done them in!
Now the Falcon is back.
His survival's a fact!
Conservationist—Saved the Peregrine!

The Gray Catbird has an odd peculiar name.
Half-cat and half-bird sounds so strange.
He picks songs from a hat;
Then he cries—like a cat!
But we know, it's part of his game.

Hummingbirds hardly ever touch ground.
They appear to fly faster than sound!
Whirling wings, in a blur.
Could be Him—maybe Her!
How many Hummers, would you say, make a pound!

Birding

by Jean Parker Katz

Of course, I know a robin
And a black-capped chickadee,
But when it comes to warblers
They are just a mystery.

I think I know a titmouse
But there are several kinds of quail;
And a blue jay's fairly easy
But how about a rail?

I've never seen an eider—
I haven't had that luck,
But I recognize a mallard—
That's another kind of duck.

The beak is blue on a ruddy duck
And everyone knows a pigeon
But I am out beyond my depth
With a duck that's called a wigeon.

Well, yes, I know a cardinal,
Though I've been known to gripe
When identifying sparrows
Or looking for a snipe.

I've watched the little hummers
And wondered at their flight;
I've seen some owls in daytime
And heard them hoot at night.

I've got a lot of bird guides
But I don't know where to look
When the bird I see before me
Is nowhere in the book.

So I feel just like a booby
And it really is a shame
That I often chance to see a bird
And then can't find its name.

In spite of all frustration
You bet that I sure mean it
That, nameless or familiar,
I'm glad that I have seen it!



Upcoming Programs

Please Note: HMBC programs will return to the Colonie Town Library at 7PM starting in September. No HMBC programs are scheduled in July or August.

Monday Sept. 9, 7 PM, Colonie library. Bill Gorman, movies on hummingbirds (rescheduled from Jan 02 due to snow)

Mon Oct 7 Birding North America workshop. Join your fellow HMBC travelers for a unique and informative evening. Club members who have been to various birding destinations, near and far, will be prepared to share information on their favorite places. Rather than a series of slide presentations, this will be an opportunity to talk with folks at a series of tables about places they've been to, and that you may want to visit! A more definitive list of the places covered will be available in the August issue, but likely hotspots include Texas, Arizona, Florida, Alaska, Churchill, California, Atlantic Canada, Coastal Massachusetts and Cape May, NJ.

Thurs Oct. 10, 7:00 PM, Colonie Library. Joint Audubon and HMBC program, Joan Morrison, Caracaras

Mon Nov 4, 7:00 PM Colonie Library. Alvah Sanborn, Sights and Sounds of a Southern Swamp.

Audubon Society of the Capital Region — Upcoming Programs

Thurs Sept. 12 Tom Lindsay, East Coast Refuges, 7 PM, library.

Thurs Oct. 10, 7PM, Library. Dr. Joan Morrison, Caracaras. Joint Audubon and HMBC program.

The crested caracara is one of our most unique raptors. It is the only member of the caracara group found in North America; populations occur in Texas and in Florida, where it is a threatened species primarily due to loss of its grassland and pasture habitat resulting from agricultural and urban development. In the field, the crested caracara is unmistakable. Though in fact a falcon, it has a decidedly hawk-like build and bearing. Most often, it perches conspicuously on a fencepost or telephone pole, with its long, yellow legs and tail distinguishing it from crows or vultures, even in silhouette. Closer inspection reveals the caracara's regal cap of black feathers, yellow-orange face, and bluish bill. Its body is mostly black, but the neck, breast and upper back feathers are white-tipped with horizontal black bars. While often seen scavenging road-killed animals, the caracara is actually a diet generalist, feeding on small mammals, birds, snakes, frogs, fish, and insects as well as carrion and scraps. Unlike other falcons, caracaras do build nests: bulky structures of twigs and vines placed almost exclusively in cabbage palm trees. Both adults share parental duties, and the young remain with their parents for several months after fledging. I studied the breeding biology and habitat use of crested caracaras in Florida for 7 years. We obtained good information on its reproductive ecology, nest success, productivity, habitat use, home range, and survival. The caracara's future in Florida is complex and uncertain, involving people, land use, and economic issues. The fact that most pairs live on privately owned cattle ranches necessitates the cooperation of ranchers, scientists, and land management agencies in conservation planning. My next step in research is to develop population viability models to predict the caracara's future in Florida given rapid land use change, particularly to citrus and sugar cane.

speaker bio:

Dr. Morrison is currently an Assistant Professor of Conservation Biology at Trinity College. She received her Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology and Conservation at the University of Florida and has worked on Crested Caracaras in Florida since 1992. In 1997-1999 she studied another species of caracara that lives in southern Chile. Before her Ph.D., Dr. Morrison worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Forest Service in Alaska, Colorado, Washington, and New Mexico. She has also taught biology for non-majors, ornithology, and mammalogy at Colorado State University. Her current research involves urban birds in the general Hartford area and the status of American Kestrels in Connecticut.



Action Alert!

Toll-Free Dead Bird Reporting Hotline Initiated

In an effort to further study the West Nile Virus and other causes of bird mortality, the USDA with the help of the New York State Health Department has established a toll-free hotline number so New York State residents can report dead birds in their community:

(866)-537-BIRD (2473).

Audubon New York has begun a statewide public education and outreach campaign to inform New Yorkers of this number, which is being distributed as a public service announcement to top radio stations, television stations and print media.

"It is of critical importance that New Yorkers be made aware of this toll free number," stated Sean Mahar, legislative assistant at Audubon New York. "Citizens throughout the state are our first line of defense when it comes to learning about how birds are affected by the West Nile Virus, and other impacts to our environment. They have now been given the chance again to play a critical role in the collection of key data that will help the state and counties deal with West Nile virus while also providing important information on bird mortality."

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Report all sightings: We ask that you report *all* dead birds you find to this number, and encourage your neighbors and friends to do the same. We need to get as many reports as possible to further this scientific study.

Call the media: Call radio stations, television stations, and newspapers in your area and tell them about this number. Ask that they play it, or show it whenever they can. Give them a copy of our public service announcement (see attachment) to use. We need to establish this critically important number!

Do whatever you can to inform members of your community of this number!

(866) 537-BIRD

(866) 537-2473

Call Sean Mahar Legislative Assistant at Audubon New York with any questions at (518) 869-9731



Upcoming Field Trips

JUNE 29 A DAY OF BREEDING-BIRD ATLASING (full day)
SAT **Coordinator: Laura Sommers** **756-8346**

The second New York State Breeding Bird Atlas is in full swing and this trip will give participants an opportunity to help contribute data on an atlas block in southern Albany or northern Greene County. Of course, the focus will be on finding breeding species, but this trip will also provide some insight into how atlasing is done and the significance of this sort of data collection by birders. Contact the coordinator ahead of time for directions and meeting time.

JUNE 30 DYKEN POND (morning)
SUN **Coordinator: Jackie Bogardus** **283-6603**

Dyken Pond Environmental Education Center is situated on the Rensselaer Plateau where the towns of Grafton, Poestenkill and Berlin meet. At an elevation of 1600 to 1800 feet, the area includes a wide variety of habitats and offers birders a great opportunity to quietly and leisurely enjoy the outdoors. The Center has over six miles of trails that are well marked and relatively easy to traverse. Join us for this morning walk where we hope to see a great variety of resident and nesting species. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Tamarac School on State Route 2 in Cropseyville.

JULY 1 - ***RESERVATIONS DUE FOR CAPE MAY — SEPT 20—22 *******

JULY 6 HANNACROIX RAVINE PRESERVE
SAT **Coordinators: Jocelyn Cole-Calkins & Ron Calkins** **768-2911**

This morning trip to southern Albany County will be spent hiking along the Hannacroix Creek in search of Scarlet Tanager, finches, warblers, thrushes and other summer residents. Meet at 7:00 AM in the Bethlehem Central High School parking lot on Delaware Avenue in Delmar.

JULY 14 CHERRY PLAIN STATE PARK (morning)
SUN **Coordinators: Dan Welch & Lynn Huntington** **477-2980**

This area on the Rensselaer Plateau ranges from 1300 to 2000 feet and hosts a fine variety of higher elevation species. We'll look for Winter Wren, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Purple Finch, Hermit Thrush, Veery, Mourning, Blackburnian, Canada and a host of other warblers, as well as Broad-winged and Red-shouldered Hawks. Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the entrance to Cherry Plain State Park on Miller Rd. between Routes 42 and 43 in the Town of Berlin, Rensselaer County.



Feathers

JULY 21
SUN

CANOEING AND WALKING TRIP TO CONSTITUTION MARSH SANCTUARY (all day)

Coordinators: Scott & Denise Stoner

785-6760

Joint Trip with Capital Region Audubon

We will explore this National Audubon Society sanctuary and Important Bird Area along the east bank of the Hudson River in Putnam County by foot and canoe. The canoe portion of the trip will be led by Audubon staff and canoes will be provided! Preregistration is required; there is both a minimum and a maximum number for this trip, so call early. We will also hike the rocky trail along the edge of the river in search of breeding songbirds, and explore the marsh from the new boardwalk, dedicated to the memory of longtime warden Jim Rod. This promises to be a fun day and we hope you can join us. Parking is limited at the Sanctuary so we will need to carpool from the Capital Region.

Important Logistical Issues: Parking is extremely limited; carpooling from the Capital Region is strongly advised. Constitution Marsh is approx. 2 1/2 hours from the Capital Region. Coordinators will assist with carpooling arrangements and provide directions and starting time. **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR THIS TRIP!** There is both a minimum and a maximum number of participants; last year we had to cancel because we did not meet the minimum. The sooner you call, the better chance you have of getting on the trip, and the better chance that the trip will "go." Call the Coordinators, Scott and Denise Stoner, at 785-6760 to sign up. The deadline for signing up is July 5, but all spaces might be taken by then.

- There is a fee of \$20/adult (\$15 Audubon member, senior and student) and \$8/child to participate. No children under 7 allowed. Participants must use the canoes provided and cannot bring their own canoes or kayaks. Maximum: 15 participants.

AUG 3
SAT

GRAFTON LAKES STATE PARK (morning)

Coordinators: Philip and Marjorie Whitney

477-9050

Finding birds in August can be a challenge, even at Grafton Lakes, where 70+ species live and breed every summer. Most are not announcing their presence, and many are scruffy, just-out-of-the-nest fledglings that present different kinds of identification problems than their noisy, breeding-plumaged parents did only a month or two ago. Even so, the rich variety of habitats in and around the park should provide a fun morning with a good assortment of birds. Meet at 7.30 AM on the loop road outside the main park entrance on Route 2, about 14 miles east of Troy.

AUGUST 7 - RESERVATIONS DUE FOR JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

NOTE—COORDINATOR CHANGE FOR JAMAICA BAY

AUG 11
SUN

JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

Coordinator: Gregg Recer

899-2678

Local Leader: Mike Bochnick

Reservations by August 7

Migrating shorebirds are the main attraction this time of year at this wildlife refuge in the New York City area. Expect to see herons and egrets, and possibly Clapper Rail and Boat-tailed Grackle. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Visitor Center at the refuge. Call the local Coordinators to register and arrange for carpooling.



AUG 25
SUN

***HOLLYHOCK HOLLOW SANCTUARY — INSTRUCTIONAL TRIP (morning)**

Coordinator: Gary Goodness

862-9260

Join us for an introduction to birding at the Audubon Society's Hollyhock Hollow Sanctuary at 46 Rarick Road in Selkirk. Former "teacher extraordinaire", Gary Goodness, will lead us through the trails of this 140 acre sanctuary of woodland, meadow, creek and garden habitats in search of local breeding birds and migrants moving south as the summer draws to an end. The diverse habitat is sure to produce a good variety of birds and many opportunities to practice your bird identification skills. Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the Sanctuary.

(Other local trips in Sept.)

SEPT 20 - 22
FRI—SUN

CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY

Coordinator: Gerry Colborn

Limit: 12 people

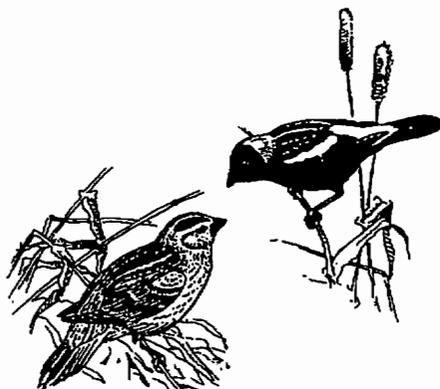
*****Reservations by July 1 ******

237-3898

This will be our 3rd fall trip to Cape May and we will again focus on migrants. Accipiter/falcon migration will be close to its peak while passerines and shorebirds will still be moving through in good numbers. The trip will also include trips to Brigantine NWR and other southern NJ hot spots. We may also participate in a whale watch.

Wilton Wildlife Preserve & Park field trip

The Wilton Wildlife Preserve trip, originally proposed for May or June, will be run in September. Bob Budliger will be coordinator. Look for complete details in the August *Feathers* on Birdline (439-8080) or on the HMBC web site (hmbc.net).





Program Reports

April (Annual) Meeting: Bird Song

At our 2002 Annual Meeting, HMBC members were treated to an evening with one of America's preeminent experts in bird song biology: Dr. Donald Kroodsma of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst. I learned of Don last spring while on an HMBC trip at the Lake Taghkanic State Park with Bill Cook; they were old classmates at Hope College in Michigan. Don came highly recommended and did not disappoint us!

With some slides and mostly tapes, he taught us to think about and appreciate the complexity of song from common birds and to open our ears to the wonders of spring birdsong. Songbirds have two voice boxes and can sing duets with themselves!

Beginning with his dissertation subject, Bewick's Wren, and moving quickly on to the Black-capped Chickadee we learn that things are not as simple as they sound. There are three separate populations of this common chickadee on the small island of Martha's Vineyard, each singing a different dialect! Winter Wren in the eastern and western US have distinctly different songs and may well be separate species.

The Northern Mockingbird, thought to be a champion mimic, has a repertoire of about 200 songs, while its relative the Gray Catbird has 300 - 400 and the Brown Thrasher an incredible 2,000 songs! I didn't think to ask Don a question that I had to ponder on my oral ornithology final many years ago, "Why do mockingbirds sing at night?" Or the one that Denise later asked me, what would mockingbirds sing if they never had anything to mimic? Maybe I'll email those to Don and publish his reply in the next issue....

Some more astounding facts about our common friends: The Northern Cardinal's clear descending whistle is actually made with two voice boxes, one doing the higher part and the other the lower. The birds practice to make a perfect seamless transition between them!

Chipping Sparrows sing from the ground before dawn, giving forth bursts of song. Later in the day, they sing a continuous song from the tops of trees.

Bird song is fascinating and complex...there is so much to it. It offers a window into the bird's mind. Thank you Don, for opening our minds as well as our ears to the beauty and intriguing questions posed by the songs of birds we thought we knew so well!

- Scott Stoner

Email answers from Dr. Donald Kroodsma to the questions above.

1) **Why do mockingbirds sing at night?**

I am told the answer is simple. It is the unmated males that sing at night. Just recently I was in



Florida and heard a bird singing at 3am. It was remarkable how well the sound traveled. Every female and every male within earshot (perhaps at least 50 birds total) was put on notice that this male was eager to accept a lady. Quite remarkable.

2) What would mockingbirds (or catbirds or brown thrashers) sing if they weren't mimicking anything? In other words, do they have a 'song' of their own or are they 100% mimics?

Tough question. Lots of what thrashers and catbirds do is not mocking, so I assume that they'd make up their songs, as a good catbird in captivity can do. A baby catbird raised without hearing any other catbirds comes up with perfectly normal catbird song, without any of the mimicry. So I think that they'd have fine songs without the mimicry . . .by improvising, by making the songs up, based on the instructions that their genes provide for them.

May Program: Atlasing

At the HMBC May program, NYS Breeding Bird Atlas Project Coordinator Kim Corwin Hunsinger gave an enthusiastic mid-term report on the first two years of the Atlas along with a plea for assistance in completing this project in its three remaining years. Some blocks are completed, many are partially completed, but many have yet to be done. So...if you can help, please contact Region 8 coordinator, Jane Graves (see club directory) or log on to the Atlas website, <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/wildlife/bba/index.html>

If you have an observation while you are traveling or birding in someone else's block or in another part of the state, this information can be valuable; contact Jane or check the website for a casual observation form.

Kim presented an overview of the project and the categories for breeding activity. She gave a very useful quiz at the end, and addressed many practical questions that we atlasers had.

Some interesting results are already being seen from the first two years. Merlin, for instance, not found in the first atlas 20 years ago, is now breeding in a number of upstate locations. Other birds such as Red-bellied Woodpecker have markedly expanded their range into our area.

This is a great opportunity to make a difference with your bird knowledge and effort. Please sign up to cover a block this year!



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HMBC Contact Information

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

Email: contact@hmbc.net

HMBC website: <http://hmbc.net>

Reminder!!

All HMBC Board meetings are open to all Club members. Meetings are held at Five Rivers Center or other local venues at 7:00 PM, usually on the second Monday of odd-numbered months. The next Board meeting will be on July 8. Contact Lynn Huntington for location details.

Publication Committee Changes

The Publication Committee is expanding. Bob Miller and Laura Sommers will be helping with formatting for *Feathers*. To facilitate this, please send all **electronic** submissions **via e-mail** to:

Laura Sommers

lsommers@lycos.com

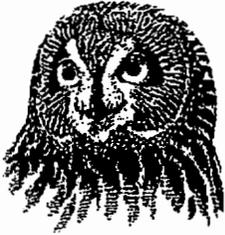
All **paper** submissions should continue to be sent to:

Cathy Graichen
23 Scotch Mist Way
Malta NY 12020

Many thanks to Laura and Bob for volunteering to contribute to the *Feathers* effort!

Watch for further announcements as we refine this process.

Feathers



President's Corner: This has been an unusual spring to be sure. Birders out for the Century Run this past weekend spent their morning following movements in the trees only to discover it was clods of snow falling to the ground and many of the migrants were safely tucked away in crevices and other hiding places waiting for the strange late spring snow storm to pass by. The colors of spring still linger however and many species were reported in spite of the snowy and very cold conditions.

On a happier note, Kim Hunsinger was our guest speaker at the last member meeting and she reports much progress to date on the Breeding Bird Atlas project. Many thanks to the numerous Hudson Mohawk Bird Club members who are participating in this project. The project will survey the entire state to determine what birds are breeding in various parts of the state. The state is broken into regions and then into three mile "blocks". There is plenty of time for you to participate in this very worthwhile effort. It really is a different kind of birding that is quite enjoyable and educational too. What you do is sign up for an available block and then survey it for all the different kinds of habitat within it and what birds you see in it. Next, you try to upgrade the birds you see to probable breeders and finally some of the birds to confirmed breeders. There are many people who are willing to help you if you are unsure and many hands really do make light work so please join in, you will be rewarded. The results of the efforts of thousands of volunteers from all across the state will be published in a book.....a book that you can be a part of by contacting our Region Coordinator Jane Graves at 518-587-8992.

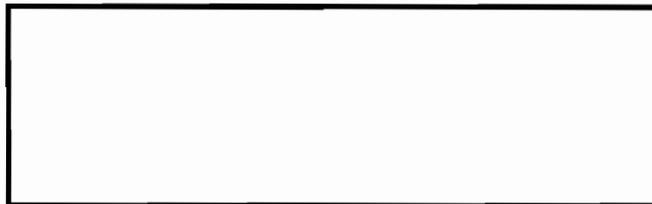
Good Birding,

Lynn Huntington

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CENTURY RUN SNOW LATEST ON RECORD

By Robert P. Yunick

Snow! Yes, officially 2.2 in. of it at the Albany Weather Station on May 18, 2002 set a new record for latest spring snow since records began in 1795. Higher elevations in the area experienced 3-4 in. of the wet, heavy, sticky stuff which weighted down leafed-out trees and shrubs. It began at night as rain which became silent as the changeover occurred; then during the day created motion and noise as it fell from trees causing difficulty in detecting movements of the few birds that were active. Bird song was near zero as temperatures struggled to exceed 40 deg. F.

The Club's 57th consecutive Guy Bartlett Century Run was a disaster, and the day's weather record will set a standard against which future Century Runs will be measured for many years to come. Four field parties (second lowest to two in 1946) of 16 people, afield from 0300 to 2100, found a total of 131 species and one hybrid; and only Ray Perry, the guy afield 0300 to 2100, broke the century mark with his one-man effort of 102 species entirely within Schenectady County, the lowest species count since 101 on the rainy 1963 Century Run. Other party lists varied from 48 to 83 species.

Some of the comments offered by party leaders appeared more intriguing than the birds seen or not seen. Carl George was philosophical with his comments: "It was a challenging day. Regardless, we consider 82 species listed a kind of moral victory. The day called for good humor, stamina and adjustment of well laid plans." Ray Perry mused:

"Conditions were Postal: rain, snow, dark of night."

The day before was a beautifully sunny day, and the weather forecasters were caught totally off guard by the events of May 18. On the 17th I was at Jenny Lake in Saratoga County banding hummingbirds: six new birds and nine returns from previous years, one a month shy of seven years. Those same birds were a sorry-looking sight on the 18th as they dejectedly perched with at feeders, feathers fluffed. Seven of the 15 were recaptured days or weeks later indicating their ability to survive such adverse weather.

My sunflower seed feeders were crowded with extraordinary numbers of PURPLE FINCHES and AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES feeding to ward off the cold. But most spectacular were the side-by-side two's and three's of
continued ...

In This Issue....

Five Rivers Expansion

Upcoming Field Trips and Programs

Field Trip and Program Reports

Hot Line Info (West Nile Virus)

Feathers



male Rose-BREASTED and EVENING GROSBEAKS, sometimes six to eight per feeder. What a gorgeous, striking display of color against the snow-covered newly green leaves in the background! While not participating officially in the count, I added EVENING GROSBEAK and RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH to bring the list to 133, the lowest since 125 in 1963, and 10th lowest in all Century Runs including three conducted in the 1930's.

On the brighter side, the best bird of the day was also a feeder bird - a hybrid new to the list, a WHITE-THROATED SPARROW X DARK-EYED JUNCO seen at Five Rivers Education Center where some of the birding was done indoors, warm coffee cup no doubt in hand. It brings the composite list to 252 species and three hybrids.

Most aspects of the count were negative such as the low participation, low species counts and the like noted above. In addition, AMERICAN WOODCOCK and BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER were missed for the first time in Century Run history, while WHIP-POOR-WILL and CEDAR WAXWING were missed for the second time ever. No owls were reported. Warbler species were only 18, while the average since 1960 has been 26 (range of 20-31).

Species reported by all groups was a low 33 compared to 37 last year and 58 the year before. Birds were difficult to find and this was exemplified by a high 39 species and a hybrid reported by only one group. For the past two years only 25 forms were on the one-group list. Normally the species reported by only one group are ones difficult to find, but this year included some of the more usually found birds in a normal year. All in all, it was just a bad birding day.

Rarities, birds reported for ten or fewer times in the past, were waterfowl - species least affected by the weather of the day, because they live in it quite regularly. They were: GADWALL, 10th time; AMERICAN WIGEON, second; and RUDDY DUCK, eighth time.

Thanks to the brave souls who ventured out. Next year will be better; it cannot possibly be worse. Field group information is listed below. Species listed by group are those seen only by that group. Names with asterisks were group reporters:

Group A - George Shaw, Henry Stebbins, Kurt Weiskotten and Carl George*, 0400-1930, 82 species. Black Creek Marsh, Five Rivers, Vly Creek Res., Thacher Park, Basic and Alcove Res., Stanton Pd., Dunn Mem. Bridge, Round and Saratoga lakes, Mohawk River at Crescent Pool and Colonie Landfill, Cold Spring Rd., and Collins Lake. AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, RUDDY DUCK, PEREGRINE FALCON, HERRING GULL(!), GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL, BLACK TERN, CHIMNEY SWIFT, PURPLE MARTIN, CLIFF SWALLOW, PINE WARBLER, and WORM-EATING WARBLER.

Group B - Larry Alden*, Jackie Bogardus, Steve Chorvas and Jeff Marx, 0400-1100 (55 species) and 1300-1700 when Marx/Alden added 28 species for a total of 83. Albany County including Black Creek Marsh and vicinity, and Thacher Park. NORTHERN HARRIER, COOPER'S HAWK, VIRGINIA RAIL, COMMON SNIPE, COMMON RAVEN, BROWN CREEPER, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, YELLOW-THROATED VIREO, NORTHERN WATER-THRUSH, and PINE SISKIN.

Group C - Scott Stoner*, Alan Mapes*, Denise Stoner, Jocelyn Cole-Calkins, Beverly Gudz, Tina Markopoulos and Patti Packer, 0600-1220, 48 species and one hybrid. Five



Feathers

Rivers Education Center, Delmar. EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE and WHITE-THROATED SPARROW X DARK-EYED JUNCO hybrid.

Group D - Ray Perry, 0300-2100, 102 species. Schenectady County including Collins Lake, Blatnick Park, Lock 7, Niska-Isle, Niskayuna RR Station, Aqueduct Park, Gateway Landing, Indian Kill, Schenectady Co. Airport, Sanders Preserve, Wolf Hollow, and Rotter-

dam. BRANT, RING-NECKED DUCK, GREATER YELLOWLEGS, LESSER YELLOWLEGS, UPLAND SANDPIPER, LEAST SANDPIPER, COMMON NIGHTHAWK, PILEATED WOODPECKER, HORNED LARK, FISH CROW, HERMIT THRUSH, BLUE-HEADED VIREO, NASHVILLE WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER, BAY-BREASTED WARBLER, INDIGO BUNTING, and SAVANNAH SPARROW.

Common Loon	a	d	Lesser Yellowlegs		d
Double-crested Cormorant	a	d	Solitary Sandpiper	b	d
American Bittern	a	b	Spotted Sandpiper	a	c d
Great Blue Heron	a	b d	Upland Sandpiper		d
Green Heron	a	b c	Least Sandpiper		d
Brant		d	Common Snipe	b	
Canada Goose	a	b c d	Bonaparte's Gull	a	d
Wood Duck	a	b d	Ring-billed Gull	a	d
American Black Duck	a		Herring Gull	a	
Mallard	a	b c d	Great Black-backed Gull	a	
Blue-winged Teal	a	d	Black Tern	a	
Gadwall	a	d	Rock Dove	a	b d
American Wigeon	a	d	Mourning Dove	a	b c d
Ring-necked Duck		d	Common Nighthawk		d
Common Merganser	a	d	Chimney Swift	a	
Ruddy Duck	a		Ruby-throated Hummingbird	a	b d
Turkey Vulture		b d	Belted Kingfisher	a	b c d
Northern Harrier		b	Red-bellied Woodpecker	a	b c d
Cooper's Hawk		b	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		b d
Red-tailed Hawk	a	b d	Downy Woodpecker	a	b c d
American Kestrel	a	b c d	Hairy Woodpecker	a	c d
Peregrine Falcon	a		Northern Flicker	a	b d
Ruffed Grouse	a	b d	Pileated Woodpecker		d
Wild Turkey		b d	Eastern Wood-Pewee		c
Virginia Rail		b	Least Flycatcher		b d
Sora		b d	Eastern Phoebe	a	c d
Killdeer	a	b d	Great Crested Flycatcher		b c d
Greater Yellowlegs		d	Eastern Kingbird	a	b c d

Feathers



Horned Lark		d	Black-throated Blue Warbler		d
Purple Martin	a		Yellow-rumped Warbler	a b c d	
Tree Swallow	a b c d		Black-throated Green Warbler		d
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	a	d	Pine Warbler	a	
Bank Swallow	a	d	Bay-breasted Warbler		d
Cliff Swallow	a		Black-and-white Warbler	a	d
Barn Swallow	a b	d	American Redstart	b	d
Blue Jay	a b c d		Worm-eating Warbler	a	
American Crow	a b c d		Ovenbird	b	d
Fish Crow		d	Northern Waterthrush	b	
Common Raven	b		Louisiana Waterthrush		c d
Black-capped Chickadee	a b c d		Common Yellowthroat	a b c d	
Tufted Titmouse	a b c d		Wilson's Warbler	b c	
Red-breasted Nuthatch (Bob Yunick)			Scarlet Tanager	a b	d
White-breasted Nuthatch	b	d	Northern Cardinal	a b c d	
Brown Creeper	b		Rose-breasted Grosbeak	a b	d
Carolina Wren	a b		Indigo Bunting		d
House Wren	a b c d		Eastern Towhee	a b	d
Marsh Wren	a b	d	Chipping Sparrow	a b c d	
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	a b c d		Field Sparrow		c d
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	b		Savannah Sparrow		d
Eastern Bluebird	a b c d		Song Sparrow	a b c d	
Veery	a b	d	Swamp Sparrow	a b c d	
Hermit Thrush		d	White-throated Sparrow	b c d	
Wood Thrush	a b c d		White-crowned Sparrow	a	c
American Robin	a b c d		Dark-eyed Junco	a b	
Gray Catbird	a b c d		Dark-eyed Junco X White-Throated Sparrow		c
Northern Mockingbird	a b c d		Bobolink	b	d
Brown Thrasher		c d	Red-winged Blackbird	a b c d	
European Starling	a b c d		Eastern Meadowlark	b	d
Blue-headed Vireo		d	Common Grackle	a b c d	
Yellow-throated Vireo	b		Brown-headed Cowbird	a b c d	
Warbling Vireo	b	d	Baltimore Oriole	a b c d	
Red-eyed Vireo	a b	d	Purple Finch	a	c
Blue-winged Warbler	b	d	House Finch	a b c d	
Nashville Warbler		d	Pine Siskin	b	
Yellow Warbler	a b c d		American Goldfinch	a b c d	
Chestnut-sided Warbler	b	d	Evening Grosbeak (Bob Yunick)		
Magnolia Warbler	b	d	House Sparrow	a b c d	



Five River Expansion

Five Rivers has recently acquired two parcels of land totaling 57 acres, resulting in a fifteen percent expansion of Center lands. The first is a 51-acre parcel formerly owned by B. Robert and Jean Joel, who lived on their land for 30 years. The six acre Foresman property, acquired by Friends of Five Rivers several years ago, has also been purchased by the State. These acquisitions, which expand the Center to 402 acres, will provide open space protection in an area experiencing accelerated development and will protect important water resources in the Phillip-inkill stream corridor, a tributary of the Vlomankill, which in turn flows into the Hudson. The properties also include a 30-acre field that will be managed specifically for the protection grass-land species of concern, including Meadowlark, Bobolink, Savannah Sparrow and others. The State eventually plans to develop trail access to the new acquisition.

Friends of Five Rivers has an active Land Protection Committee that helps make neighboring land owners aware of the group's land protection goals and encourages them to protect open space, either by selling lands to the State or by otherwise ensuring their preservation. In fact, the Joels first expressed an interest in preserving their property when contacted by the Land Protection Committee several years ago. The committee maintains regular contact with other landowners bordering the Center.

There are several other parcels that may be available. The Open Space Institute, whose president, Joe Martens is a Town of Bethlehem resident and a strong supporter of Five Rivers, has expressed an interest in attempting to purchase adjacent properties and then selling them to the State once DEC has replenished its land protection funds. Friends of Five Rivers is very supportive of these activities, and we will do whatever we can to make sure additional lands

Field Trip Reports

Ann Lee Pond 16 May 2002

Eighteen birders at Ann Lee Pond on a cloudy May evening were rewarded with almost nonstop sightings and song. Among the notables present were Green Heron, Wood Duck, Warbling Vireo, BELTED KINGFISHER, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, PILEATED WOODPECKER, WOOD THRUSH, AMERICAN REDSTART, SCARLET TANAGER, ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK, and BALTIMORE ORIOLE. We saw an interesting "dancing" display by two DOWNY WOODPECKERS; in poor

light it was unclear whether either bird had a red hat, so this could have been either courtship or a territorial dispute. A silent, mystery flycatcher hawking insects from a high snag near the pond was the subject of long debate; the final consensus was that it was probably an EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE. As the list was being tallied at about 8 PM, a GREAT BLUE HERON high overhead brought the final species count to 36.

— Philip and Marjorie Whitney



Carter Pond 8 June 2002

On June 8, eight Club members in four canoes met for a late afternoon/early evening exploration of Carter Pond in Washington County. Although at least an hour from the middle of the Capital Region, this is a gem of a spot and well worth the drive. Readers may find past Feathers articles by Jim Sotis, Denise and myself informative, as well as the club's book chapter, by Jim Sotis. One change from the book: The road that the pond is on is now called County Road 49. It is a north turn from SR 29 east of Greenwich (look for the sign to Cossayuna Lake).

As we launched our boats about 4:30 we heard YELLOW-THROATED VIREO singing. We first paddled to the South marsh where we had many RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS, an immature and adult BALTIMORE ORIOLE, a nice view of a Red-Tailed Hawk overhead along with a TURKEY VULTURE.

As we headed out toward the North marsh, we spotted two large birds in a large dead tree, which turned out to be an immature and an adult GREAT BLUE HERON. We also heard a LEAST FLYCATCHER as well as an Empid. That was either ALDER or WILLOW; its vocalizations were not clearly that of either species and it ultimately fell silent.

Proceeding into the extensive north marsh we heard a clucking/whirring call that was identified by Gregg Recer as a COMMON MOORHEN. We took our dinner break here while we waited in an effort to try to see this bird; these efforts were unsuccessful, as it was likely in the interior portion of a large vegetated area. We did see WOOD DUCK and MALLARD, and observed the evidence of extensive beaver activity including a huge lodge, several dams and recently felled trees.

We were able to paddle a good distance up into the North marsh. As the weather got cooler, we enjoyed CEDAR WAXWINGS on the way out. Our last bird was a RED-EYED VIREO, which was singing as we returned to the launch area about 7:30 PM.

— *Scott Stoner*

Instructional Trip Five Rivers 13 June 2002

On the evening of Thursday, June 13, 6 members of HMBC enjoyed the lengthening light of late spring as they observed the abundant bird life at Five Rivers. This was a return to the idea the instructional field trip, and although most of the participants were not beginning birders, everyone seemed to enjoy the slow pace, close observations and generally relaxed nature of the experience. It was a nice change of pace from the relatively breakneck pace of birding during the height of spring migration.

The group began its outing at the birdfeeders, enjoying wonderful looks at the RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS there, as well as the lively debate that resulted in the identification of a female ROSE-BREADED GROS-BEAK.

Out on the trails, 27 more species were added to our evening's list. Included were some of the common residents of Five Rivers, like WOOD THRUSH, HOUSE WREN, CEDAR WAXWING, GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, OVENBIRD, AMERICAN REDSTART and BALTIMORE ORIOLE.

It was a fine, relaxing evening of bird watching, giving participants a chance to tarry over favorite species and discuss them at length. I



hope that the Bird Club will continue the practice of including these instructional trips in the future.

— *Denise Hackert-Stoner*

Hannacroix Ravine Preserve 6 July 2002

A lazy summer's morning was spent up in the Helderberg Mountains listening to the flute-like serenade of Hermit Thrush and Wood Thrush. Our walk passed through a variety of habitats. Pine needles carpeting the pine forest floor muffled our steps as we listened to SCARLET TANAGER, BLUE-HEADED VIREO, BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER, BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER AND YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER. The field of wildflowers was the hiding place for a young fawn. EASTERN KINGBIRDS hovered and caught insects on the wing, while the shrill whistles of CEDAR WAXWINGS were heard overhead. The canopy of the deciduous woods was the hiding place for the RED-EYED VIREO while the open

forest floor resonated with the song of the OVENBIRD. Openings within the forest canopy create unique habitats of tangled growth of raspberries, blackberries, other shrubs and tall plants. Within these tangles the little MASKED WARBLER, THE COMMON YELLOW-THROAT scolded from a safe distance, while AMERICAN REDSTARTS and CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLERS darted above our heads from overhanging branches.

As the morning hours progressed into the lunch hour, the heat of the day was upon us. Once our group climbed the steep slope up the other side of the ravine, we had a leisurely walk on the smooth bedrock that the Helderberg's are so noted for. Chipmunks darted in and out of the old crumbling stone fences that line this old road bed. As our walk ended, the birds began to settle down for the warm, humid lazy afternoon in the Helderbergs.

— *Jocelyn A. Cole-Calkins*

Location: Hannacroix Ravine Preserve

Weather: Sunny, becoming partly cloudy. Day became partly overcast due to smoke from forest fires in Canada; breezy; upper 70's

Time: 7:30 - 12noon

Species: 34

MOURNING DOVE

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER

DOWNY WOODPECKER

EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE

LEAST FLYCATCHER

EASTERN KINGBIRD

BLUE-HEADED VIREO

RED-EYED VIREO

BLUE JAY

TREE SWALLOW

BARN SWALLOW

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

TUFTED TITMOUSE

WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCH

VEERY

HERMIT THRUSH

WOOD THRUSH

AMERICAN ROBIN

GRAY CATBIRD

CEDAR WAXWING
BLUE-WINGED
WARBLER

CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER

BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER

BLACK-THROATED GREEN

WARBLER

AMERICAN REDSTART

OVENBIRD

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT

SCARLET TANAGER

CHIPPING SPARROW

DARK-EYED JUNCO

ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK

BALTIMORE ORIOLE

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

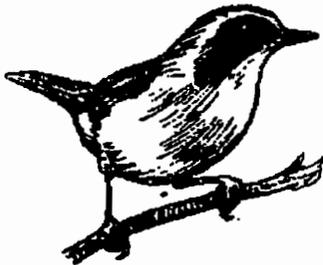
WHITE-TAILED DEER FAWN



Constitution Marsh 21 July 2002

On July 21, 14 people explored Constitution Marsh Sanctuary by canoe and by foot in this joint field trip of the HMBC and the Audubon Society of the Capital Region. Constitution Marsh is a wetland along the East side of the Hudson River in Putnam County, NY, across the river from West Point. This national Audubon Society sanctuary is also an Important Bird Area (IBA) and offers both wetlands and rocky woodlands to explore.

We were met upon arrival at about 8:45 at the sanctuary visitor center by Assistant Director Rich Anderson, who led the canoe trip through the marsh. Travel here is entirely tide-dependent; and must be done near high tide or the areas to be traversed are just mud! Bird activity in the marsh was typical of midsummer; MARSH WRENS were abundant



and we eventually got some good looks at these elusive creatures. Interestingly, they build a half-dozen or so nests but only use one. Other species identified while on the marsh include

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, YELLOW WARBLER, INDIGO BUNTING, SWAMP SPARROW AND EASTERN WOOD PEWEE. We focused on plants as well; of particular interest were the arrow arum and the similar pickerel weed, the narrow-leaved cattail, jewelweed, some phragmites and wild rice.

We returned to the launch point just in time, as the tide was rapidly receding and we nearly scraped bottom! After a break for

lunch (BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER present), we explored the rocky hillside trail and boardwalk that extends out into the marsh. The trail is interesting in that it gives a great view of both the marsh and the treetops; although passerines were few in the afternoon heat, this would be a great place during migration. We did see at least a half-dozen GREAT BLUE HERONS out on the marsh, and both Osprey and RED-TAILED HAWK overhead. A flurry of passerine activity including BLUE-WINGED WARBLER just as we returned to the visitor center was a nice finish to the afternoon.

— Scott Stoner





Action Alert!

Toll-Free Dead Bird Reporting Hotline Initiated

In an effort to further study the West Nile Virus and other causes of bird mortality, the USDA with the help of the New York State Health Department has established a toll-free hotline number so New York State residents can report dead birds in their community:

(866)-537-BIRD (2473).

Audubon New York has begun a statewide public education and outreach campaign to inform New Yorkers of this number, which is being distributed as a public service announcement to top radio stations, television stations and print media.

"It is of critical importance that New Yorkers be made aware of this toll free number," stated Sean Mahar, legislative assistant at Audubon New York. "Citizens throughout the state are our first line of defense when it comes to learning about how birds are affected by the West Nile Virus, and other impacts to our environment. They have now been given the chance again to play a critical role in the collection of key data that will help the state and counties deal with West Nile virus while also providing important information on bird mortality."

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Report all sightings: We ask that you report *all* dead birds you find to this number, and encourage your neighbors and friends to do the same. We need to get as many reports as possible to further this scientific study.

Call the media: Call radio stations, television stations, and newspapers in your area and tell them about this number. Ask that they play it, or show it whenever they can. Give them a copy of our public service announcement (see attachment) to use. We need to establish this critically important number!

Do whatever you can to inform members of your community of this number!

(866) 537-BIRD

or

(866) 537-2473

Call Sean Mahar Legislative Assistant at Audubon New York with any questions at (518) 869-9731



Upcoming Programs

Please Note: HMBC programs will return to the Colonie Town Library at 7PM starting in September.

Monday, September 9, 7pm at William K. Sanford (Colonie Public) Library, Colonie,
"Hummingbirds" Bill Gorman Hummingbirds, with their brilliant flashes of iridescent colors, are the feathered jewels of the birding world. Found only in the Americas, we are fortunate to have 16 species of hummingbirds that nest in the US. Their small size and swift erratic flight frequently make hummingbird observation and photography somewhat difficult. Regardless of the effort, these spectacular birds are always a joy to behold. Please join Bill for his close-up movies of the colorful and fascinating hummingbird gems of the United States. (rescheduled from Jan 02 due to snow)

Monday October 7, 7pm at William K. Sanford (Colonie Public) Library, Colonie
"Birding the USA." Ever wanted to visit a birding hotspot somewhere else in the US, but didn't have enough information? While the Internet places the world at your computer, there is still value in speaking to one of your colleagues who has actually been there. Collectively, HMBC members have traveled to a wide variety of birding locales across the US. In this workshop, folks will be available to answer your questions about birding from one end of the US to the other, covering Maine, Massachusetts, Cape May, South Florida, the Louisiana Coast, the southern Texan Coast and Rio Grande Valley, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, California, Alaska and Hawaii. Naturally, we may not be expert on every bird or every part of each state, but a wealth of knowledge will be present and available for you!

The format for this workshop is different from the typical travelogue program; tonight the "presenters" will be at tables with some information on the locations available for you to browse through; no formal slide program will be offered. But what we will offer is the chance for some direct, personal dialog with people who have recently birded some of the USA's best known and less known birding hotspots. Come and take advantage of the knowledge in your Club!

Thursday, October 10, 7pm at William K Sanford (Colonie Public) library, Colonie, with Capital Audubon
see Audubon programs, next page

Monday, November 4, 7pm at Five Rivers Environmental Ed Center, Delmar
"Sights and Sounds of a Southern Swamp" Alvah Sanborn Southern swamps are full of life, beauty and a degree of mystery. His beautiful close-up color slides capture the beauty of all the forms of life therein. The fragile beauty of the swamp lily, the bromeliads and of course, the ancient bald cypress. Avian inhabitants depicted include Limpkin, Wood Stork, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-crowned Night Heron and even the extinct Ivory Billed Woodpecker. Action shots of the king of the swamp, American alligator complete the show, which is coupled with tape recordings. Come experience the sights and sounds of a southern swamp!

Introductory Workshop for Junior Birders

Saturday, September 28, 8:30 - 11:00 AM, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

Instructors: Deb Smith and Donna Zimmerman, phone: 399-9007

Learn how to observe a bird in the wild and learn the proper use of binoculars. Take a bird walk to practice these skills. Get an introduction to some of the common feeder birds. Build a simple bird feeder so that you can start attracting birds to your yard. Refreshments will be served.

Appropriate for 10 to 14 year olds. Limited to 20 participants. Reservations required by September 25 by phoning number above. Bring a CLEAN, dry, paper half gallon milk/juice carton. If possible, bring binoculars, a field guide, a pocket notebook and a pencil.



Audubon Society of the Capital Region — Upcoming Programs

Thursday September 12th, Tom Lindsay, East Coast Refuges, 7 PM, library.

Moose in Maine - Eagles in New Hampshire - Egrets in Massachusetts
Osprey in Rhode Island - Shorebirds in New Jersey - Snow Geese in Delaware
Whitetail Deer in Maryland - Wild Horses in Virginia - Red Wolves in North Carolina
Alligators in South Carolina - Wild Hogs In Georgia - Manatees in Florida
EAST COAST REFUGE

In March of 2003 the US Fish & Wildlife Service will mark the 100th anniversary of the National Wildlife Refuge system. The refuges along the eastern edge of the United States offer critical feeding and resting areas to migratory waterfowl traveling the Atlantic flyway, as well as year-round homes for other bird species, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. While some refuges are remote and off-limits to all human visitation, many others offer "wildlife drives" that allow close viewing of many animals, including endangered species. Photographer Tom Lindsay has visited eastern US refuges from Maine to Florida, and will share his tips on when to visit specific refuges to maximize your chances of seeing wildlife.



Bobcat, Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Florida

Copyright Thomas D. Lindsay

Thurs Oct. 10, 7PM, Library. Dr. Joan Morrison, Caracaras. Joint Audubon and HMBC program.

The crested caracara is one of our most unique raptors. It is the only member of the caracara group found in North America; populations occur in Texas and in Florida, where it is a threatened species primarily due to loss of its grassland and pasture habitat resulting from agricultural and urban development. In the field, the crested caracara is unmistakable. Though in fact a falcon, it has a decidedly hawk-like build and bearing. Most often, it perches conspicuously on a fencepost or telephone pole, with its long, yellow legs and tail distinguishing it from crows or vultures, even in silhouette. Closer inspection reveals the caracara's regal cap of black feathers, yellow-orange face, and bluish bill. Its body is mostly black, but the neck, breast and upper back feathers are white-tipped with horizontal black bars. While often seen scavenging road-killed animals, the caracara is actually a diet generalist, feeding on small mammals, birds, snakes, frogs, fish, and insects as well as carrion and scraps. Unlike other falcons, caracaras do build nests: bulky structures of twigs and vines placed almost exclusively in cabbage palm trees. Both adults share parental duties, and the young remain with their parents for several months after fledging. I studied the breeding biology and habitat use of crested caracaras in Florida for 7 years. We obtained good information on its reproductive ecology, nest success, productivity, habitat use, home range, and survival. The caracara's future in Florida is complex and uncertain, involving people, land use, and economic issues. The fact that most pairs live on privately owned cattle ranches necessitates the cooperation of ranchers, scientists, and land management agencies in conservation planning. My next step in research is to develop population viability models to predict the caracara's future in Florida given rapid land use change, particularly to citrus and sugar cane.



Feathers

V64N4
Page 65

OCT 7
MON

***INDIAN MEADOWS — INSTRUCTIONAL TRIP (morning)**

Coordinator: Peggy Rudis

371-5051

Geared toward beginning birders, this will be a leisurely morning trip to this Town of Glenville Park in Schenectady County.. Because this park has a variety of habitats, we will be looking for migrant warblers as well as sparrows, woodpeckers and local feeder birds. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking area across from the tennis courts. (Indian Meadows is on Droms Rd. which can be reached from Swaggertown Rd. off SR50 in Scotia or Charlton Rd. in East Glenville.)

OCT 13
SUN

MONTEZUMA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (full day)

Coordinators: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen

899-2678

This 6,432 acre refuge has a widely diversified habitat with extensive marshes and is best during spring and fall migrations when tens of thousands of birds pass through. We can expect to see waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors including Bald Eagles and migrants passerines, particularly sparrows. We may even be treated to one of those occasions when a rare bird appears (the 2001 trip turned up a Greater White-fronted Goose). This will be a full day trip so bring a lunch. Call the coordinators for the meeting time place.

OCT 17
THURS

THURSDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP (morning)

Coordinator: Bill Lee

374-3426

Join the Thursday morning birding group to hunt for migrating sparrows, warblers and waterfowl that may be in the area. Our destination will depend on what species are currently being reported locally. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. in front of the Golden Krust Bakery at 180 Ontario St. in Cohoes (on Route 470 1/8 of a mile east of Route 787, across from the U-Haul)

NOV 3
SUN

TOMHANNOCK RESERVOIR (morning)

Coordinator: Bill Gorman

477-4921

This morning trip around the Reservoir should yield loons and grebes, a variety of ducks (possibly including sea ducks), and large numbers of geese. Meet at 8:30 a.m. on Lake Shore Drive near its junction with Route 7 (at the west end of the causeway)

NOV 8 - RESERVATIONS DUE FOR THE NIAGARA RIVER TRIP (Nov 23—24)

NOV 23-24
SAT—SUN

NIAGARA RIVER

Coordinator: Bill Lee

Reservations by November 15

374-3426

The Niagara River, between Lakes Erie and Ontario, hosts thousands of gulls at this time of year. A wide variety of gull species will be present. We have a reasonable chance of finding Lesser Black-backed, Little, Franklin's, Common Black-headed, Bonaparte's, California and White-winged Gulls, plus Black-legged Kittiwake. This is a very good time of year for rare gulls. This will be a joint trip with the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs.



Program Reports

June Meeting: Collins Lake

On June 3, about 25 interested people turned out to hear a fascinating account by HMBC member and retired Union college biology professor Carl George on his 10 years of research into avian populations at Collins Lake in Scotia. Every day for 10 years, Carl and his students counted waterfowl at this lake.

Carl adds the following details:

"Mallards and Black Duck are the primary members of the "vespertine arrival," this beginning almost exactly 20 minutes after sunset and generally complete within about 15 minutes, the arrivals coming from all directions and often in small groups. Common Merganser, Wood Duck and Canada Goose also participate. Quinlan Park, on Washington Ave. at the East end of the lake is the best venue.

The project had the overall intent of learning about the waterbirds of Collins Lake. The discipline came in terms of regular and systematic observation with detailed recording of species, numbers of each, sector of lake in which seen, background in terms of lake level, air temperature, wind direction, cloud cover, presence of anglers on the water at lakeside, etc. The hardest aspect was to keep from making generalizations along the way -- which always got in the way of unbiased observation, e.g., predicting the first arrival and final departures of various species. The moment one started doing this one was prone to overlook species which were "supposed to be gone"! We did not engage with the project to test a theory or to prove or disprove a hypothesis. We had no central controversial issue as our focus.

The computerized statistical treatment of the data is, of course, a crucial element. The web address is <http://tardis.union.edu/~birds>.

But most of all I wanted to accent the importance of Natural History as a key element of modern science. It remains the fountainhead for the various fields of science. But in spite of this, and sadly, rigorous Natural History has been put on the back burner or fully excluded from academic biology departments all across the country. "

— *Scott Stoner with Carl George*



Feathers

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HMBC website: <http://hmbc.net>

Publication Committee Changes

The Publication Committee is expanding. Bob Miller and Laura Sommers will be helping with formatting for *Feathers*. To facilitate this, please send all **electronic** submissions **via e-mail** to:

Laura Sommers

lsommers@lycos.com

All **paper** submissions should continue to be sent to:

Cathy Graichen
23 Scotch Mist Way
Malta NY 12020

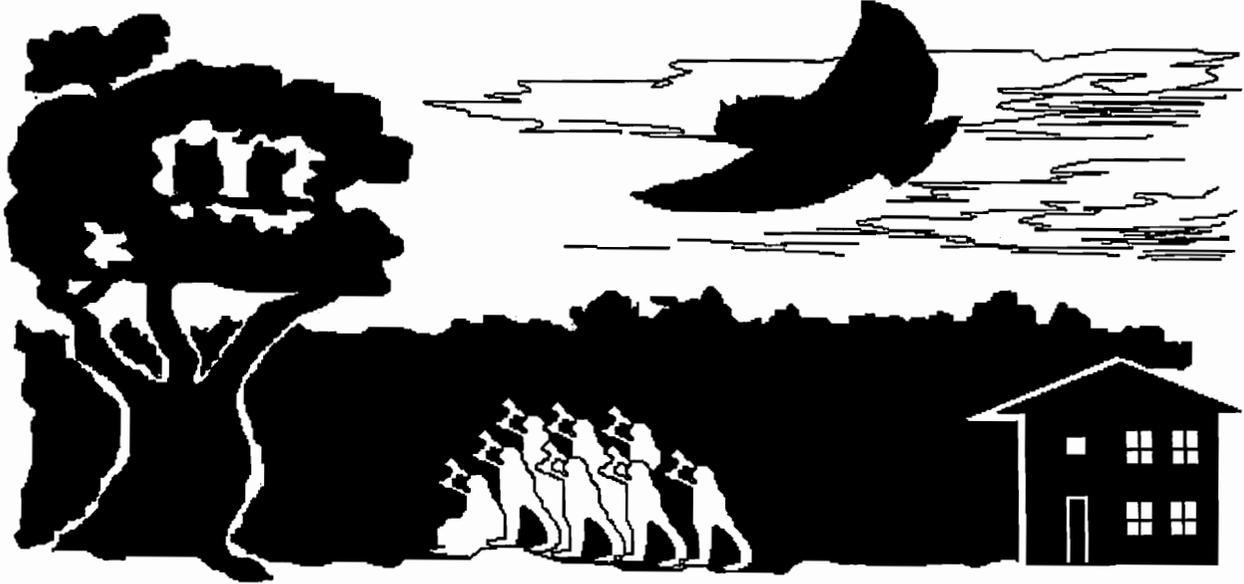
Many thanks to Laura and Bob for volunteering to contribute to the *Feathers* effort!

Watch for further announcements as we refine this process.

Reminder!!

All HMBC Board meetings are open to all Club members. Meetings are held at Five Rivers Center or other local venues at 7:00 PM, usually on the second Monday of odd-numbered months. The next Board meeting will be on September 11th. Contact Lynn Huntington for location details.

Feathers



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Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club
c/o Five Rivers EEC
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Delmar, N.Y. 12054

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"WARBLERS ON THE BEACH"

Birding the Dry Tortugas

By: Scott and Denise Stoner

Upon Scott's arrival to the Dry Tortugas in 1988, he wrote "warblers on the beach" in his notebook. They were, literally, on the beach, exhausted. Although this type of fallout is not always encountered, it was a memorable first impression.

Seventy miles west of Key West lay the seven small sand and coral reef islands of Dry Tortugas National Park. With 100,000 nesting Sooty Terns, and colonies of BROWN NODDY, MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD and MASKED BOOBY, the possibility of pelagics and BROWN BOOBY enroute, WHITE-TAILED TROPICBIRD, and even BLACK NODDY at the Park, and a spring migrant trap that ranges from good to outstanding, you can see why this new national park is a must-visit for birders!

Scott has been to the Dry Tortugas twice, in 1988 and again, with Denise, in 2002. Since that first trip, it has been designated a national park and transportation options have increased, but the birding has stayed the same – great.

The Dry Tortugas were discovered in 1513 by Ponce de Leon. His ships were stocked with the prevalent "tortugas" or sea turtles, but the islands were dry. Recognizing the strategic importance of this area within the Florida Straits, the Army became interested in the Tortugas in the early 1800s. Predating the park, Fort Jefferson National Monument

was designated in 1935. The Monument preserved the historic Fort Jefferson on Garden Key, which was constructed with 16 million bricks over a 30-year period starting in 1846 but never completed. Fort Jefferson did serve as a Civil War prison where deserters from the Union Army were held. Later the four "Lincoln conspirators" were also imprisoned there, including Dr. Mudd, who had treated Lincoln assassin John Wilkes Booth. Mudd was later pardoned after helping fight a severe outbreak of yellow fever in the Fort. The entrance to his cell can still be seen on the self-guided walking tour of the Fort. In 1992, Congress created Dry Tortugas National Park to protect natural as well as historic features.

The park is comprised of seven islands and
continued ...

In This Issue....

*Pinnacle - Species High Day
Counts, 1996 - 2001*

Upcoming Field Trips and Programs

Field Trip and Program Reports

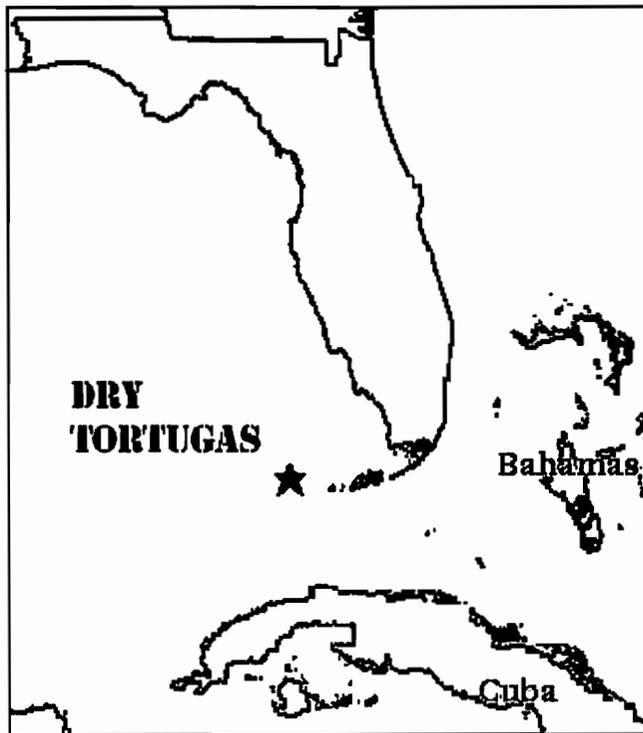
*"Birding NY H-M Region" Book
Announcement*

Feathers



about 100 square miles of surrounding water. Garden Key holds Fort Jefferson; Loggerhead Key (named for the turtles) is home to a light house (completed in 1858 and still operational); Hospital Key, East Key, Middle Key, Bush Key and Long Key fill out the list.

There are several ways to reach the Dry Tortugas: seaplane, daily fast (and faster) ferry and on a live-aboard boat on a birding tour. Camping is possible outside of the fort on Garden Key (very limited space, NO water). The typical birding tour spends part of one day in the deeper waters enroute from Key West for pelagics, two nights anchored near Garden Key, and parts of three days exploring the grounds in and around Fort Jefferson. A visit is usually made to Loggerhead Key, along with a ride past several other islands to observe breeding boobies, terns and frigatebirds.



We will omit the names of the companies we traveled with, but there are several that visit the Tortugas in the April - May time frame. Both the 1988 and 2002 trips, with different companies and different boats, were good, but there is a range of price, vessel and group size and accommodations that people may or may not wish to consider. Club members who are interested can contact us if they want further details.

Scott's account of the 1988 trip.

The 1988 trip was aboard an 80-foot catamaran motor vessel with rustic accommodations; little privacy and triple-decker bunks for approximately 30 birders. (Note: this is where Scott, before he moved to Albany, first learned of the HMBC from Bob Kirker, who was also on that trip!) We left Key West early in the morning for the 6 - 7 hour journey. As we neared the Tortugas, we had a BAY-

BREASTED WARBLER land, exhausted on the boat. When we arrived in mid afternoon at Garden Key, my first impression was "warblers on the beach." The upper part of the beach was littered with exhausted warblers, picking through the seaweed for nutrients. Overhead was a constant presence of soaring frigatebirds, punctuated by a cry of "tropicbird" which drew our attention for a look at a distant passing WHITE-TAILED TROPIC-BIRD. Inside the fort

was a plethora of exhausted migrant songbirds of seemingly every variety, some being consumed by the opportunistic CATTLE EGRETS! It was a major fallout, bad for the birds but easy birding, and easy picking for the egrets. We stayed there on the boat two nights, had a major windstorm the first night and an early morning thunderstorm the second night. It was overly air conditioned on the boat, and one night I got up to check on the weather and while I was gone, someone took my sheet!



One day we went to Loggerhead Key, which in 1988 was heavily vegetated with Australian pines, where passerine birding was excellent. We also went via dinghy alongside Bush Key to view the vast colonies of terns, including at least one BLACK NODDY, and took the big boat over for a look at the MASKED BOOBY colony on Hospital Key.

Denise and Scott's account of their 2002 trip:

In 2002 we took a smaller boat, 60-foot, which slept 11 in four separate staterooms. Our room was very small, with bunk beds and little room for our stuff, but it was a big improvement over the barracks-style of the previous trip. The general schedule of the trip was similar. We spent the first night on the boat, at dock at Stock Island near Key West, and left about 4:45 AM Monday morning. Getting up for breakfast we were well out to sea, taking a southerly detour into deeper waters for a chance at pelagics. We were blessed with following seas, which (according to our Captain) was good news. Along the way we were rewarded with repeated close views of a POMARINE JAEGER, both flying and sitting in the water. We also had good views of two bridled terns on a floating piece of wood, and saw roseate tern and brown booby. Unfortunately the stopping and looking down, with binoculars, instead of at the horizon, adversely impacted upon Denise's stomach! She was down for the count for part of the trip, but recovered instantly upon reaching dry land. Along the way we also spotted a waterspout, which at one point reached the water, causing considerable spray.

After going near Hospital Key to see the 50 masked boobies on this tiny piece of sand, we headed to calmer waters of the harbor at

Garden Key for lunch, followed by an afternoon's exploration of Fort Jefferson. Over the three days, we explored Fort Jefferson several times, spent a morning at Loggerhead Key, and rode in a small boat past the vast nesting colonies on Bush and Long Keys. For convenience, the several visits to Garden Key/Fort Jefferson will be described together.

Garden Key had a decent variety of migrants, but not the kind of fallout there was in 1988. The inside, garden area of the fort has lawn and a number of trees; over the three days we had good views of about 15 warbler species. One of the best places to bird was near the benches by the dripping fountain. There we enjoyed watching in the shade for the HOODED and PALM WARBLERS and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT to visit. BARN and the occasional CAVE SWALLOW swooped around the fort, along with AMERICAN KESTREL, MERLIN and PEREGRINE. MERLINS were chasing warblers in the air! A very exhausted GLOSSY IBIS was there, which did not hold much promise of survival; discussion centered on the appropriateness of bringing it to the mainland for rehabilitation vs. letting its genes die out of the gene pool. We did not see the bird the last morning so it became a moot point. CATTLE EGRETS were there but there were slim pickings of songbirds. One of the most fascinating sights was that of larger birds in unusual places, such as the two SORA that were about eye level, deep in the middle of a bush. Barely visible, it was an incredible sight. We also enjoyed the ever-present dozen or so MAGNIFICENT FRIGATE-BIRDS overhead all day, our constant companions. One afternoon we raced out to the North coaling docks in response to a radioed report of a BLACK NODDY. It took some repeated searching as it kept flying and re-landing, among hundreds of BROWN NODDY,

Feathers



has cut down all the Australian pines, in an effort to remove nonnative vegetation. Although this has changed the birding character of that island, it was the right thing to do, and native plants will now have a chance. It was a beautiful island, very tropical, with a lighthouse, a few small buildings, lots of palms and low prickly scrub. Birds included MERLIN, PEREGRINE, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK and PRAIRIE and PALM WARBLERS. A slow troll past Bush and Long keys (now connected to Garden Key) in the skiff provided ample opportunity to view the nesting colonies of SOOTY TERN, BROWN NODDY and MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD. A few males were displaying, their red throat pouches expanded. Some had young in the nests.

After a final half morning in the Fort that culminated with the first rain shower of the trip,

we sadly departed for the voyage back to Key West. The seas had built to 3 to 4 feet, and we were mostly heading into them, making for a less comfortable and wetter ride back than the ride out. Apparently calm, though, compared to the spring of 2001! But, we did see a few birds and the seas smoothed out a bit partway through.

We heartily recommend a visit to the Dry Tortugas during spring migration. It is a great trip to take on its own or in combination with a visit to Everglades National Park or other south Florida birding spots.

Further information about the park can be obtained by writing to Dry Tortugas National Park, P.O. Bo 6208, Key West, FL 33041 or on the Internet at www.nps.gov/drto.



*My canoe slips from song to song
Like fingers on the beads of a rosary.*

Veery.

Vireo.

Wood Thrush.

Oriole.

The songs hang in the thick, fragrant air like beads on a chain.

Each one lovely in form and design.

Each one a mystery.

Each one a prayer.

— Denise Stoner
Hannacroix Creek
June 11, 2002





Owls

By Dick Patrick

A true bird watcher, that means you, remembers every owl you have ever been privileged to see. Am I right? I thought so. Keep reading if you want to hear about the owls in my life. When we were boys, Dad, who was an electrician by day and a cop by night, would take us with him when he left each morning to wire houses. With luck the job would be out in the countryside surrounding the City of Oneonta. One magnificent summer day we set out for the hamlet of West Oneonta. The fantasy was that we would help Dad, we would learn the trade, and someday take over the business. Dad was a realist, knowing that we were all too lazy ever to make that dream come true. So we would carry the tools and electrical supplies into the house, drill a few holes, maybe wire a couple receptacles, and then one day we would vanish. Dad knew the routine and didn't fight it.

This day we were exploring the pine plantation behind the house when we discovered a medium-sized bird eye level with us on a dead pine branch half way up the tree. First we thought it was a quail or grouse, then it dawned on all three of us at once – we had discovered our first owl. Red phase of the Screech Owl to be exact. We couldn't have been more excited if it had been the last existing Passenger Pigeon. And what my

brothers and I wouldn't give to have that sweet day of our youth back. "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may."

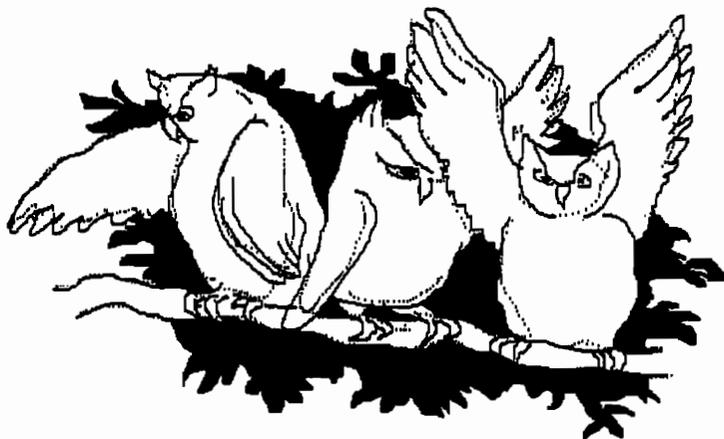


I had to wait until I was a community planner for the State of New York for my next owl. I was reading the inscriptions on tombstones by the fading light in an abandoned cemetery in the Town of Camden. A ghostly shape floated so silently over and past me to land on an ancient headstone. WHEN GOD SAID "GATHER THE GOOD GRAIN" HORACED DIED, AGE SIX.

"Whoooooo!" This was not my business. I didn't hang around.

Patsy and I took our two sons to Yosemite and there in that great valley we came upon a Great Horned Owl peering back at us from a hole in a tree. Of course we saw many wonders on that May day in 1977. Aside from Acadia it was the first national park our boys had seen. But to be greeted by a Great Horned Owl was so wonderful. We have seen a Great Gray Owl in Montana and a

Hawk Owl in Alaska and the thrill of the tundra in Barrow staked out into Snowy Owl fiefdoms; but they were pay-per-views, guided bird tours not the same as being surprised at your own good fortune.



Somewhere in be-

Feathers



tween was our own bird club trip under the baton of maestro Bill Lee to the abandoned airforce base south of the Catskills where we enjoyed the moth-like flutterings of Short-eared Owls from late afternoon into the night. That was a good time! And Sue, our daughter-in-law, zeroed in like radar on Long-eared Owls pressed tightly against the trunks of hemlocks at Middle Creek Wildlife Reservation near Hershey, Pennsylvania. It is good that Sue knew where to look as we would have never found them on our own. Just glance away and the owl disappeared against the bark.

Uncanny, as only owls can be. Our most recent brush with an owl was outside of Cave Creek Canyon in Arizona. From the ranch where we were staying you have to drive into the tiny community of Portal for supper in the backroom of the general store. I know some of you are now remembering just what you ordered in that store yourselves. Being somewhat competitive I suspect that you may also enjoy a tiny snicker that we did not find any Trogons or Becards. Patsy and I and our adult son, Jan, were taking two teenage nieces on their first trip to the southwest so they were pleased with all the varieties of hummingbirds at the feeders. Anyway supper was over, twilight was falling and Jan had the rental Explorer aimed toward the twinkling but distant lights

of Rodeo, New Mexico (the girls had never been to that state and needed it for bragging rights. A different kind of competitiveness). The stark, weird shaped peaks were fading into the dark. Classical music was blaring at top volume from the radio, yes, a PBS station

in the middle of nowhere. Everyone was straining their eyes for what would appear next. We had seen jackrabbits and then a caravan of White-shouldered Peccaries with babies making their deliberate, at their own pace, crossing in front of us. Can anything top that? Ohhh yessss, another ghost of an owl planing right at windshield height across the desert night. Five voices, "Did you see that?" No, you never forget an owl.

Let me finish with a tale of when I worked in City Hall, I had parked

by Academy Park one snowy morning when I heard crows. To me crows could mean an owl. And there was a Snowy Owl up in one of the little peaks on the east side of the Capitol. Later in the day I told Mayor Corning about it. He gave me a disgusted look and inquired why I hadn't let him know about it. I said something to the effect that you don't just burst in on the Mayor of the City of Albany to tell him about a bird. "Dick, I will never be too busy to stop what I am doing to see an owl." Me neither, Mr. Mayor, and I suspect that the rest of you readers regardless of your politics will second that motion.





Feathers

Field Trip Reports

V64N5
Page 75

Dyken Pond 30 June 2002

Eight people joined me for a bird walk at Dyken Pond in perfect birding weather. As in past years, we began our walk on the road leading down to the “pond”, which is a bit of a misnomer, given that the body of water covers several hundred acres. The water was still and there were no birds in sight – in past years we’d seen MERGANSERS here and also an OSPREY. We didn’t linger long, given the lack of activity.

Looking and listening as we wandered back toward the parking area proved to be a lot more exciting than the pond. We had a nice mix of birds, including: BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER, RED-EYED VIREO, BELTED KINGFISHER, BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, both WHITE-BREASTED and RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, OVENBIRD, and VEERY. We also saw a JUNCO with food in its beak, sitting very quietly on a hemlock branch, and heard the hammering of a PILEATED WOODPECKER quite a ways off in the woods.

We stopped for a while at the small pond at the parking area and listened to a COMMON YELLOWTHROAT, which managed to stay out of sight for all but a few seconds. We saw nesting TREE SWALLOWS here, occupying the BLUEBIRD houses. The Center Director, Lisa Hoyt, informed us that the Bluebirds have recently returned to the area, but we neither saw nor heard them on this particular day.

As we watched one of the SWALLOWS perched in a small tree, one keen-sighted birder in our group spotted a RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD sitting in the tree just above the Swallow’s head. The Hummer took off be-

fore we had a chance to figure out if it were a male or female, but happily for us, it returned a short time later and we were able to see the beautiful ruby throat, confirming its gender.

In a pine tree by the house, we heard CHIPPING SPARROW and watched a couple of YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS engaged in a rapid game of tag. A GRAY CATBIRD carried on from the dense branches of a small shrub on the edge of the pond and as we watched it, three BROWN-HEADED COWBIRDS came crashing into a tree on the edge of the woods. It appeared they had learned to fly, but hadn’t quite perfected the art of landing.

A HAIRY WOODPECKER raced over our heads here and we heard a BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER sing again as we headed down the road toward the swamp. We stopped several times along the way to look and listen and we were richly rewarded for our patience. A BLUE-HEADED VIREO landed in a tree quite close to us and we could see that it carried food in its mouth. We also heard WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS sing here, as well as HERMIT THRUSH and further on down the road we heard a WOOD THRUSH.

At the edge of the swamp we had a SONG SPARROW singing, COMMON GRACKLES flew by with food in their beaks, and we also saw RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS here. We followed the little trail through the woods to the boardwalk that crosses the swamp and stood on the boardwalk in the middle of the swamp to gaze in awe at the GREAT BLUE HERON nest, occupied by three young herons. We stayed here quite a while, watching and waiting, and again were rewarded for our patience when an adult heron flew in to feed the youngsters, while a second adult circled around and headed off over the trees and out of sight.

Feathers



The Director had mentioned that there were four young herons, but none of us was able to see more than three.

We saw an EASTERN KINGBIRD in the middle of the swamp, and several CEDAR WAXWINGS, but they were no match for the GREAT BLUE HERONS, which we could hardly take our eyes off.

There's a trail along the back edge of the swamp, which we took and got an even better look at the herons. We heard EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE here, as well as heard and saw BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER, this bird too with food in its mouth. We heard the Morse-code like tapping of a YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER here, but we didn't catch a glimpse of it. A hawk circled overhead, but at such a distance we didn't definitely id it. I initially thought it a RED-TAILED HAWK, but BROAD-WINGED HAWK has been seen in this swamp, so we couldn't rule that out, and without the scope it was just too hard to tell.

We returned back the way we came and caught a brief glimpse of a NORTHERN FLICKER as it flew across the swamp and disappeared into the woods. Entering back into the woods off the boardwalk we heard an EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE again and then got to see it. The light was bad, with the bird being backlit, so we had no real opportunity to see color, not that the pewee has much color to speak of.

We then heard and caught quick glimpses of a LEAST FLYCATCHER. It didn't sit still for more than ten seconds, and by the time binoculars were pointed towards the bird, it had already relocated itself, frustrating at least one birder to no end! Seeing that the clock was nearing noon and the birders were getting worn out, we called it a day and headed

back to the parking lot, where we added our final species for the day – a TURKEY VULTURE soaring overhead.

—*Jackie Bogardus*

Grafton Lakes State Park 3 August 2002

Eight birders spent a splendid August morning looking for birds that had lost most of their June enthusiasm for singing but none of their skill in evading binoculars. Near the loop road at the park entrance BLACK-THROATED BLUE WARBLER, NORTHERN CARDINAL, MOURNING DOVE and DOWNY WOODPECKER were spotted, along with the first of many AMERICAN GOLDFINCHES. Highlights at the blueberry patch included many juvenile and adult WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS, GRAY CATBIRDS, and CEDAR WAXWINGS, plus an AMERICAN REDSTART that put on a good show. EASTERN TOWHEES and COMMON YELLOW-THROATS could be heard but not coaxed out of hiding. Along Shaver Road and the trails near the nature center several HERMIT THRUSHES were heard and one put in a brief appearance, as did a RED-EYED VIREO and a very cooperative female SCARLET TANAGER. A BROAD-WINGED HAWK was heard overhead.

As the morning became hotter, the birds retreated deeper into hiding and a walk at Dunham Reservoir added only SONG SPARROW to the list. A last-minute visit to the swamp near White Lily Pond provided the day's mystery bird, a distant *empidonax* FLYCATCHER that tried to help us by singing repeatedly, but without expert ears in the group it must remain a probable ALDER, possible WILLOW. Adding in some of the "usual suspects", the trip total came to 27 species.

—*Phil Whitney*



**Camp Pinnacle Hawk Watch
14 September 2002**

One sharpie. That is the total count for the Hawk Watch at the Pinnacle on Sept. 14, 2002. No, no, you have misunderstood. That is not merely the count of SHARP-SHINNED HAWKS, but is the total number of migrating raptors seen in 6 hours time by a variety of watchers whose optimism gradually drained away as the hours progressed. When the bird appeared, at fairly close range, the only ones left to see it were the two Bobs (Budliger and Kirker) and I.

Special thanks are due to Gary Goodness who appeared at mid-morning to cheer us all (with a big grin in his face) by his account of over 500 hawks seen the previous day.

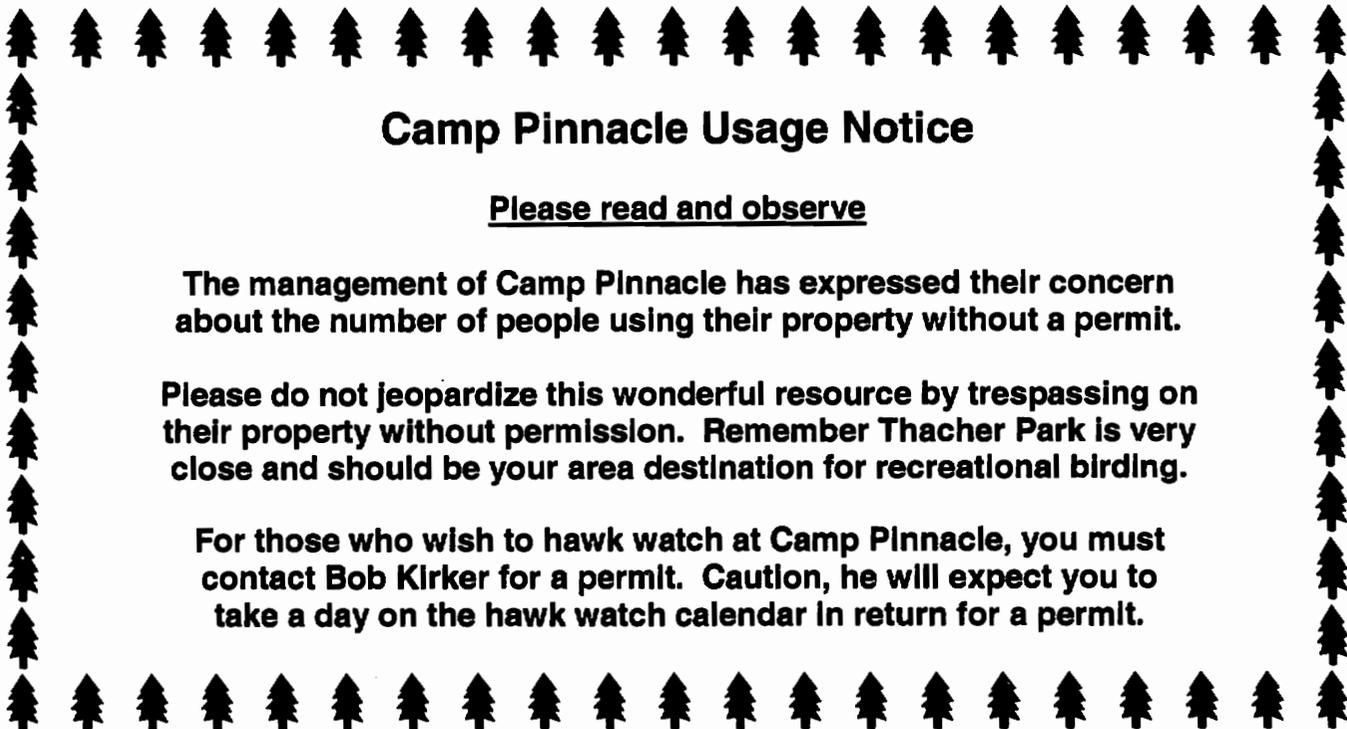
— Arthur O. Long

**Vischer Ferry
21 September 2002**

Nine birders joined us for a pleasant walk around the main eastern loop at Vischer Ferry. Only the large pond to the east of the bridge had any water. A single WOOD DUCK was spotted there, but many GREAT BLUE HERONS, two GREAT EGRETS and a GREEN-BACKED HERON were also seen. The tow path presented opportunities to observe poison ivy in its many forms and to enjoy its beautiful red fall plumage. The asters were also starting to bloom.

We saw several EASTERN PHOEBES in the woods and had a good time pinning down the identity of first a NORTHERN PARULA WARBLER and then an immature CHESTNUT-SIDED one. Also seen were RED-EYED AND BLUE-HEADED VIREO, WOOD THRUSH and RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER. In total we saw 30 species.

— Bernie & Chris Grossman



Camp Pinnacle Usage Notice

Please read and observe

The management of Camp Pinnacle has expressed their concern about the number of people using their property without a permit.

Please do not jeopardize this wonderful resource by trespassing on their property without permission. Remember Thatcher Park is very close and should be your area destination for recreational birding.

For those who wish to hawk watch at Camp Pinnacle, you must contact Bob Kirker for a permit. Caution, he will expect you to take a day on the hawk watch calendar in return for a permit.



Upcoming HMBC Programs

Monday, December 2, 7pm at Five Rivers Environmental Ed Center, Delmar

This will be the evening Holiday Party and Program.

California Deserts Dick & Patsy Patrick

The Patricks will show slides of the Palm Desert, Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage area of California showing the extravagant use of water by the wealthy in the desert. They will also share scenes of Joshua Tree National Park, the Salton Sea and a few birds for the Club to identify! Come for the food (and please bring some to share) and enjoy the pictures of warm sunny places on dark and chilly December night.

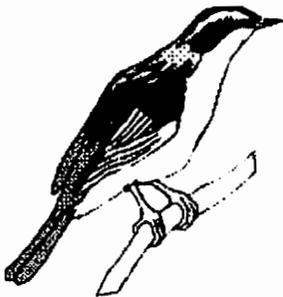
Monday, January 6, 2003, 7pm at Five Rivers Environmental Ed Center, Delmar

Everglades: In Search of the River of Grass Bob Neudel

This will be a joint program of HMBC and Capital Region Audubon

Monday, February 3, 2003, 7pm at Five Rivers Environmental Ed Center,

Grouse in New York State John Ozard



Dead Bird Reporting Hotline

1-866-537-BIRD

If you see a dead bird on your property or in a public place in your community, please call 1-866-537-BIRD

Birds give us vital information about West Nile Virus and other environmental health concerns.

During this year's mosquito season, we are asking for your help in reporting dead birds.

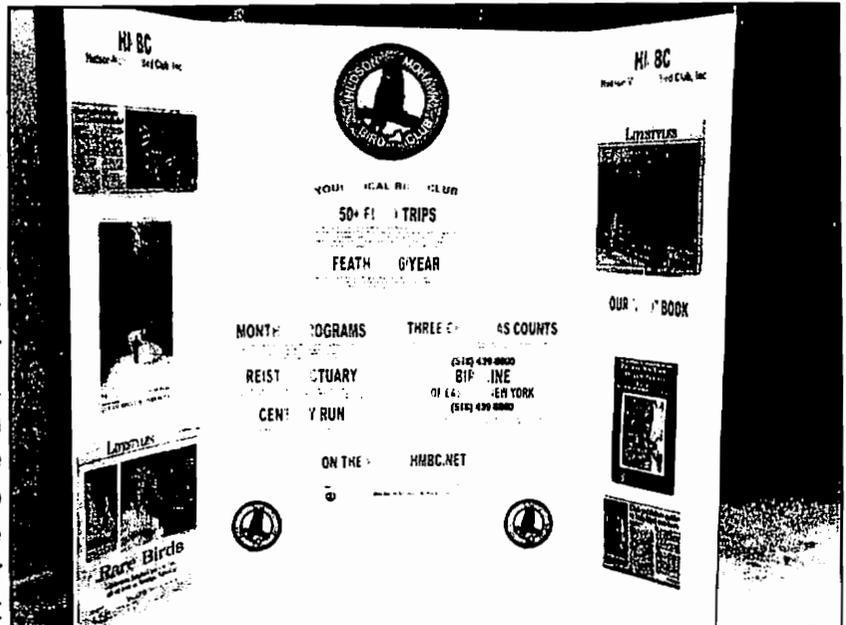
This toll free number is provided by the USDA.





Five Rivers Festival

The Five Rivers Festival was a wonderful experience for HMBC. HMBC fielded a great group, including our new Junior Education chairperson. We are all thrilled to have such a person! Not to mention the great canopy which made both the junior education and the HMBC regular tables a cooler place to be. Scott & Denise Stoner, Donna Zimmerman and Linda Parr and I were on the "grownup" tables with binoculars to try out, the new club info board (see attached picture), and our Junior Education couple covered their great bird id game (what WAS that hawk?). Since pictures were taken by the official photographer, you should be seeing more in the future. We fielded at least a dozen serious membership inquiries, and had lots of interest. Provided by the info board to take away were club membership folders and one-page field trip samples (just Sept/Oct), as well as the Red book and Feathers to look at. Just thought you'd like to know how it went. Ann B'Rells, Publicity Chair



Pictured below (left to right): Scott Stoner, Deb Smith, Donna Zimmerman (back), Denise Stoner (front) and Ann B'Rells





Upcoming Field Trips

OCT 13 MONTEZUMA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE (full day)
SUN Coordinators: **Gregg Recer & Cathy Gralchen** 899-2678

This 6,432 acre refuge has a widely diversified habitat with extensive marshes and is best during spring and fall migrations when tens of thousands of birds pass through. We can expect to see waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors including Bald Eagles and migrants passerines, particularly sparrows. We may even be treated to one of those occasions when a rare bird appears (the 2001 trip turned up a Greater White-fronted Goose). This will be a full day trip so bring a lunch. Call the coordinators for the meeting time place.

OCT 17 THURSDAY MORNING BIRDING GROUP (morning)
THURS Coordinator: **Bill Lee** 374-3426

Join the Thursday morning birding group to hunt for migrating sparrows, warblers and waterfowl that may be in the area. Our destination will depend on what species are currently being reported locally. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. in front of the Golden Krust Bakery at 180 Ontario St. in Cohoes (on Route 470 1/8 of a mile east of Route 787, across from the U-Haul)

NOV 8 - RESERVATIONS DUE FOR THE NIAGARA RIVER TRIP (Nov 23—24)

NOV 10 TOMHANNOCK RESERVOIR (morning)
SUN Coordinator: **Bill Gorman** 477-4921
(NOTE DATE CHANGED FROM ANNUAL FIELD TRIP GUIDE)

This morning trip around the Reservoir should yield loons and grebes, a variety of ducks (possibly including sea ducks), and large numbers of geese. Meet at 8:30 a.m. on Lake Shore Drive near its junction with Route 7 (at the west end of the causeway)

NOV 23-24 NIAGARA RIVER
SAT—SUN Coordinator: **Bill Lee** 374-3426
Reservations by November 15

The Niagara River, between Lakes Erie and Ontario, hosts thousands of gulls at this time of year. A wide variety of gull species will be present. We have a reasonable chance of finding Lesser Black-backed, Little, Franklin's, Common Black-headed, Bonaparte's, California and White-winged Gulls, plus Black-legged Kittiwake. This is a very good time of year for rare gulls. This will be a joint trip with the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs.

DEC 21 (Sat) SCHENECTADY 2002 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
DEC 28 (Sat) SOUTHERN RENSSELAER 2002 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT
JAN 4 ('03) (Sat) TROY 2002 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT



BOOK NEWS!!!

Birding New York's Hudson-Mohawk Region, is the club's official guide to birding in our area. You know, the red book with the beautiful photo of an Eastern Bluebird on the cover, the book with the binding that disintegrated? Yes, that's the one. Well, there's good news regarding that book. We're having the first edition reprinted and spiral bound so it holds together this time. Copies will be available in mid-November, just in time for your holiday shopping. We'll put an announcement on Birdline (439-8080) when the books are ready.

In addition to the reprint of the first edition, we're also hard at work on a second edition of the book. The second edition will be a complete update, due out in June 2005. At this time, we're seeking nominations from you for new birding locations to be included in this revised edition. If you have a favorite birding site, or perhaps a few, that you'd like to nominate, send us the name/location of the site, and a few words on why you think it should be included in the book. Keep in mind, the area the book covers includes eleven counties: Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, and Washington, so site nominations should be within this area. Send your nominations via email to Jackie Bogardus at jackieb@nycap.rr.com or mail them to HMBC, c/o Five Rivers EEC, Game Farm Road, Delmar, NY 12054. Entries must be received by November 13, 2002, to be considered.

Lastly, for all you shutterbugs out there, amateurs and professionals alike, we're also planning to solicit photographs for the cover of the revised edition. We'll be looking for a shot that says, "This is what birding in New York's Hudson-Mohawk Region is all about!" With a publication date of 2005, you've got plenty of time to think about capturing that sentiment on film. Once we've developed the layout design for the revised edition, we'll have a better idea of the specifications for the cover photo, and we'll publish the details in a future issue of *Feathers*. In the meantime, if you have any questions, contact Jackie at the email address above, or by telephone at 283-6603.



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HMBC Contact Information

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

Email: contact@hmbc.net

HMBC website: <http://hmbc.net>

Newsletter Submissions

Please send all **electronic** submissions **via e-mail** to:
Laura Sommers at lsommers@lycos.com

All **paper** submissions should be sent to:
Cathy Graichen
23 Scotch Mist Way
Malta NY 12020

Reminder !!

All HMBC Board meetings are open to all Club members. Meetings are held at Five Rivers Center or other local venues at 7:00 PM, usually on the second Monday of odd-numbered months.

Next Board meeting:
November 12, Tuesday @ Five Rivers

Other Committee News

Deb Smith now heads the Junior Activities Committee

Carl George has taken the lead for the Reist Sanctuary Committee.

Thanks to these two for volunteering. We now have a full slate of committee chairs.

Feathers



President's Corner: Greetings to all Hudson Mohawk Birders. Since it has been a while since there has been a message from the President, I thought it was time to update you on the many exciting things your board and committees are up to. We have been fortunate to have new volunteers join us in the last few months. In addition to the new additions to our newsletter staff, Bob Miller and Laura Sommers, there have been a number of others who have recently stepped up to help. We now have Deb Smith doing a great job as Junior Activities chair and she recently had the first very successful event for the committee. If you have ideas or can help Deb, I'm sure she would love to hear from you.

The management committee for the Reist Sanctuary has been extremely active with new chair Carl George at the helm. Carl has assembled a team that includes immediate past chair, Joe Cotichio and together with their team they are working on some truly exciting things. Trails are being marked, bridges being built (both literal and figurative) and plans for the future are being cemented. Call Carl if you wish to volunteer. If you have never been to the Reist Sanctuary I strongly urge you to go and see what a jewel we own.

Patti Packer has recently volunteered to help Walt Sabin on the Conservation committee. Meanwhile Jackie Bogardus is busy working on a reprint of Birding New York's Hudson-Mohawk Region, due out this fall with a new and improved binding. She is also heading up the committee to produce the second edition of Birding New York's Hudson-Mohawk Region, which will be published in conjunction with our hosting the 2005 Federation of New York State Bird Clubs annual meeting. In addition to all that is new the existing committees continue to do a fantastic job. Volunteering makes the club more your own plus offers many other personal rewards. I encourage each of you to find a niche that fits your interest and help us to be even better than the great bird club we already are. A hearty thank you to all the volunteers who do make HMBC a great group.

If anyone has an interest in event planning a co-chair is sought to help with the federation meeting. Feel free to call or e-mail me with ideas, suggestions or just to volunteer a little of your time. I can be reached at 477-2980 or e-mail me at lynnh123@earthlink.net.
Good Birding, Lynn Huntington

FEATHERS
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Delmar, N.Y. 12054

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ABA's Paul Baicich to speak of the Future of Birding and Birds
at HMBC April 8, 2003 Annual Dinner

Paul J. Baicich, co-author of *A GUIDE TO THE NESTS, EGGS, AND NESTLINGS OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS*, past editor of *BIRDING*, and the current Conservation and Public Policy Director for the American Birding Association will speak at our Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club April 2003 Annual Meeting and Banquet. This will be held on Tuesday, April 8 at the Fuller Road Fire Department (logistics and dinner reservation form to be sent to members later). Paul will speak on the "Future of Birding and Birds."

This country is experiencing a phenomenal and unprecedented growth in birding interest – multiple magazines, new quality field guides, an amazing variety of optics choices, birding trails, the spread of birding festivals, etc. Studies from the Forest Service (NSRE) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ("2001 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife-Associated Recreation") indicate that there are millions of birders and wildlife watchers out there – millions – with real interest in the pastime and the resource. Will this interest mature? Will the casual feeder-watchers of today become the avid birders of tomorrow? Will the trend institutionalize itself into the broader fabric of American life? Will the whole thing just pass us by? Will it make any difference to birds?

Not only will he focus on what recent studies have told us about who and what we are, he will examine our strengths and weaknesses

as a birding community and will discuss what possibilities and choices we have for the future. Paul has promised us that this will be historical perspective (going back to the 1400s!) and one that is fanciful. Paul will propose some vital tasks and address problems for the future of birding and bird conservation in the 21st century. He will discuss the need to blend the joys and skill-building of recreational birding with the responsibilities and need for bird conservation.

Paul J. Baicich, (b. 1948) has been a birder since his early teens in NYC. It is a passion that has never left him. He graduated from the City College of New York (B.A. Political Science) and got a Masters from Georgetown (Latin American Studies). He spent 13 years doing manual labor for a now-defunct interna-

continued ...

In This Issue....

Christmas Bird Count Recaps

Cerulean Warbler Advisory

Cape May Trip Report

2003 Field Trips



tional airline.

Paul has worked for the American Birding Association since the early 1990s. He organized their conferences and conventions from 1991 through 1995, edited 14 of their "ABA Bird-finding Guides," edited their magazine, BIRDING, for almost 5 years, and is now the ABA's Director of Conservation and Public Policy.

He co-authored (with Colin J. O. Harrison) "A Guide to the Nest, Eggs, and Nestlings of North American Birds" (Academic, 1997) and has also served as a leader and co-leader for multiple birding trips to Alaska (Attu, the Pribilofs, Nome, Gambell).

Please join us at the April 8th meeting to give Paul a warm welcome.

Historical Christmas Bird Count Recaps

Troy Christmas Bird Count December 30, 2000

This year's count was shortened by the big snowstorm, but everybody got out birding before the storm to get what they could. Due to a cold snap in the week before the count, there was a lot of ice on the rivers, and open water was hard to find. Even the normally ubiquitous CANADA GEESE were scarce. A real shock was the four RING-BILLED GULLS, which should reinforce the maxim "bird every bird". There were some missed common species (GREAT BLUE HERON, SHARP-SHINNED HAWK, AMERICAN KESTREL, RUFFED GROUSE, BELTED KINGFISHER, RED-BREASTED NUT-HATCH, and all the wrens) which may have been due to the weather before the count or just the fact that the count was done by 12:30. Surprisingly, we got three record high totals (BALD EAGLE - 9, FISH CROW - 35, and YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER - 8). Otherwise, it was a humdrum count (but not for those of us who had "interesting" trips home afterwards) with a total of 62 species on the day of the count and two more during the count week.

2001 Troy Christmas Bird Count December 29, 2001

The 2001 Troy CBC resulted in a respectable 68 species and one hybrid for the count day, plus two additional species in the count week (defined as three days before and after the actual count day). Most importantly, we added a new species for the count, TUNDRA SWAN (which was located on the Tomhannock Reservoir) bringing the 55-year total for the Troy Count to 138 species.

Colder weather drove away some of the half-hardies which were counted on the HMBC's earlier CBCs but it remained warm enough to keep most of the open water ice-free. This led to the Tomhannock being the hot sector for waterfowl in the count circle. The downside of this was that there was no snow cover to drive the land birds to the feeders or make them stand out in the landscape. Hawk numbers were a bit lower than normal, too.

We reached or tied record highs for 13 species (COMMON LOON, SNOW GOOSE, WOOD DUCK, AMERICAN GREEN-WINGED TEAL, RING-NECKED DUCK, COMMON MERGANSER, WILD TURKEY, RING-BILLED GULL, LESSER BLACK-

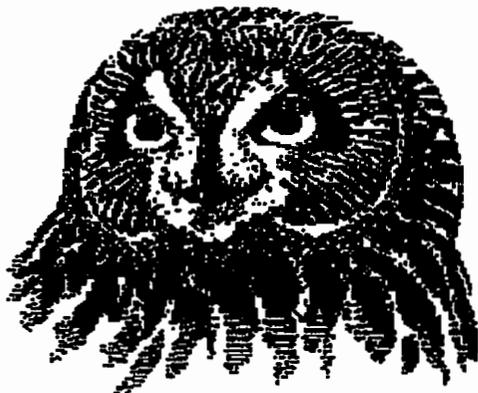


Feathers

BACKED GULL, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, AND BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD), smashing longstanding record highs for some (notably six COMMON LOONS - the old record of two dated back to 1953).

The winter finch invasion did not manifest itself in our part of the world. With northern and western parts of the state triumphing in large numbers of CROSSBILLS, GROSBEAKS, REDPOLLS, and BOHEMIAN WAXWINGS, the best we could manage was a handful of COMMON REDPOLLS.

The crow situation bears some watching. As most of you know, a large wintering congregation of crows roosts in our count circle. The only problem this has caused in the past is how to count them all (count them as they leave the roost, count them during the day as they forage, or count them as they return to the roost?) Now, a few complaints from people who watched "The Birds" a few too many times drove the City of Troy to call in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to break up the roost (i.e., harass the birds). I suppose it's better than shooting them, like they do at the Colonie Landfill. I presume this harassment will become an annual thing throughout the region, since Albany followed Troy's lead early this year.



Species	2001 Totals	2000 Totals
Common Loon	6	
Great Blue Heron	1	
Snow Goose	4025	6
Canada Goose	16011	3610
Canada Goose (small form)		1
Tundra Swan	1	
Wood Duck	2	1
American Wigeon	1	
American Black Duck	330	219
Mallard	1533	492
Mallard hybrid	4	2
Northern Pintail	1	
Redhead		1
Am. Green-winged Teal	2	
Ring-necked Duck	149	9
Greater Scaup	cw	1
Lesser Scaup	1	
Long-tailed Duck		1
Common Goldeneye	170	53
Hooded Merganser	105	2
Red-breasted Merganser	1	
Common Merganser	817	67
Ruddy Duck	1	
Bald Eagle	7	9
Northern Harrier	2	2
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1	
Cooper's Hawk	2	1
Red-tailed Hawk	93	37
Rough-legged Hawk		2
American Kestrel	3	
Merlin	1	1
Ruffed Grouse	3	
Wild Turkey	231	70
Ring-billed Gull	2451	4
Herring Gull	1450	310
Iceland Gull	cw	2
Lesser Black-backed Gull	3	
Great Black-backed Gull	522	321
Glaucous Gull		2
Rock Dove	1990	751
Mourning Dove	436	200
Eastern Screech-Owl	4	2

Feathers



Species	2001 Totals	2000 Totals	Species	2001 Totals	2000 Totals
Great Horned Owl	7	9	American Robin	234	79
Belted Kingfisher	8		Northern Mockingbird	4	5
Red-bellied Woodpecker	9	2	European Starling	4061	1840
Downy Woodpecker	71	37	Cedar Waxwing	94	141
Hairy Woodpecker	29	5	Northern Shrike		1
Northern Flicker	13	11	Yellow-rumped Warbler		8
Pileated Woodpecker	4	2	American Tree Sparrow	158	144
Horned Lark		31	Song Sparrow	10	25
Blue Jay	210	169	Swamp Sparrow		1
American Crow	5719	6499	White-throated Sparrow	14	61
Fish Crow	2	35	Dark-eyed Junco	264	192
Common Raven	1		Northern Cardinal	105	56
Black-capped Chickadee	689	185	Snow Bunting		100
Tufted Titmouse	139	66	Red-winged Blackbird	8	5
Red-breasted Nuthatch	1		Common Grackle		
White-breasted Nuthatch	87	41	Brown-headed Cowbird	525	1
Brown Creeper	9	1	House Finch	236	108
Carolina Wren	2		Common Redpoll	8	
Golden-crowned Kinglet	4	7	American Goldfinch	226	53
Eastern Bluebird	56	16	House Sparrow	422	150
Hermit Thrush		1	Total Birds	43789	16266
			Total Species	68	62
				+ 2cw	+ 2 cw



Details for this year's Christmas Bird Count

Area	Date	Leader	Phone
Schenectady	12/21	Bill Lee	374-3426
Southern. Rensselaer	12/28	Phil Whitney	477-9050
Troy	1/4	Larry Alden	861-6087

Larry Alden is looking for participants to take part in the Troy Christmas Bird Count. The count circle encompasses all or parts of Troy, Lansingburgh, Clifton Park, Latham, Colonie, Halfmoon, Stillwater, Tomhannock Reservoir, Melrose, Brunswick, etc. You can expect to get in the high 60s or low 70s for total number of species on average. There will be a compilation get-together at Holmes & Watson's Pub in downtown Troy afterward to get the count total and share stories. You can order off the menu if you're so inclined, or choose from a huge selection of beers to celebrate whatever you want to celebrate. He is looking for birders of any skill level - beginners will ride with experts - many eyes find the best birds! Field coverage is basically during the daylight hours, but pre-dawn owling is never discouraged.





Special Audubon Advisory Notice

COMMENT PERIOD OPENS ON CERULEAN WARBLERS

Public Has 90 Days to Weigh-In on Including the Species on Endangered List

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) has opened a 90-day comment period to allow the general public to provide information on listing the cerulean warbler as "threatened" on the Endangered Species List. This is a positive step towards getting this songbird the protections it needs to survive! The comment period will close on January 21, 2003.

The cerulean warbler - a small woodland songbird known for its bright blue plumage and distinctive song — was once common in eastern forests. But over the last 30 years, the species has declined more than 70%, and 80% in the core of its range! Cerulean warblers range across eastern North America, from the Great Plains, north to Minnesota, east to Massachusetts, and south to Louisiana. It breeds primarily in the Ohio and Mississippi River basins — and spends winter months in the Andes Mountains of South America. Unfortunately, due to habitat destruction in both its breeding and wintering ranges, primarily because of development, logging, road building and, more recently, mountaintop removal mining, the cerulean warbler has become one of the fastest disappearing birds in the United States!

Now the general public has until January 21, 2003 to provide additional information to the USFWS as to why the cerulean warbler should be included as "threatened" on the Endangered Species List. Such listing will provide the species protections under the Endangered Species Act and an earnest effort at recovering the species can begin. If you have information on present or threatened destruction or modification of cerulean warbler habitat, or other information illustrating the need to protect the species, please do not miss this opportunity to share it with the USFWS! Be sure to submit your comment by the January 21 deadline! Comments and any supporting materials should be directed to:

Field Supervisor, Ecological Services Field Office,
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
608 East Cherry Street, Room 200,
Columbia, MO 65201
or FAX: 314-876-1914.

For more information on the process, log onto the USFWS website at: http://midwest.fws.gov/Endangered/birds/cerw_find.html

From The Audubon Advisory, vol 2002, issue 23, Nov. 15, 2002,
Courtesy of Scott Stoner



Cape May Trip Report September 20th - 22nd

Twelve participants and three trip leaders gathered in Cape May, NJ to witness the avian spectacle which occurs here every autumn. It was with great anticipation that we started our first day at Higbee Beach to look for migrant passerines and other birds. Unfortunately for us, slow but steady south winds were blowing consistently throughout our trip, keeping the numbers of migrants to a minimum. Higbee Beach was very quiet. Song birds were scarce. GREAT-CRESTED and LEAST FLYCATCHERS, RED-EYED VIREO, BROWN THRASHER, BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT were among the migrants we found. In addition, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, CAROLINA WREN and CAROLINA CHICKADEE were there and would continue to be sighted over the next few days. NORTHERN FLICKERS were moving through in decent numbers. We did see a few good raptors. SHARP-SHINNED and COOPER'S HAWKS, and AMERICAN KESTREL and MERLIN were seen flying overhead. One of the ponds at Higbee had LITTLE BLUE and GREEN HERONS. A quick walk to the beach did not yield any new birds, but our attendant herpetologist, Kenny Barnett, was able to capture and give great looks at a Northern Fence Lizard.

From Higbee Beach we headed over to the Cape May Point State Park. The south winds were keeping the raptor flight down but we were able to add NORTHERN SHOVELER, GREAT EGRET, TURKEY VULTURE, OSPREY, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, SANDERLING, and CASPIAN, ROYAL, and COMMON TERNS.

Next stop was at South Cape May Meadows. Water levels were a little high but there were still some good birds there. Waterfowl included AMERICAN WIGEON, GREEN-WINGED

TEAL, NORTHERN PINTAIL and a few more NORTHERN SHOVELERS. Shorebirds included both YELLOWLEGS and PECTORAL SANDPIPERS. A NORTHERN HARRIER flew by as did another OSPREY. The abundant LAUGHING GULLS had in their number a few ROYAL and COMMON TERNS and a juvenile LITTLE BLUE HERON in white plumage fished along the edge of the cattails.

Our final stop for the evening was Nummy's Island and Hereford Inlet in the community of Stone Harbor to the north. We pulled over just across the bridge from Stone Harbor on Nummy's Island. From this point we were able to see numerous shorebirds on adjacent flats including WILLET and AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER in addition to species previously seen. Also at this stop were numerous Forster's Terns and a large roost of BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS that included in it's number a few SNOWY EGRETS, LITTLE BLUE and TRICOLORED HERONS.

Moving further down the road on the island, we found more herons, several OSPREY, FISH CROW and BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE.

While most of the group headed back to Cape May, a few of us continued to Hereford Inlet where we wandered down the beach toward a large BLACK SKIMMER colony. Along the way, we saw numerous CASPIAN, ROYAL, COMMON and FORSTER'S TERNS. After reaching the colony, we slowly edged our way close enough to get some good photos. The Skimmers number more than 300 birds of various ages and plumages. After spending a little time appreciating these birds, we headed back to Cape May to join the others for dinner.

The following day started much as the first



had. Sun-up at Higbee Beach where, despite the absence of any significant fallout, we were able to add a few new species to the trip including a fly-over AMERICAN BITTERN, YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO, RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, WHITE-EYED and PHILADELPHIA VIREOS, MAGNOLIA WARBLER and YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT. There were still several RED-EYED VIREOS and BROWN THRASHERS. We also got great scope looks at a perched MERLIN. On the way out Higbee Beach, we stopped briefly to identify a few game birds in a nearby field. Our first HELMETED GUINEA-FOWL for the trip.

After a rest, the group headed north to visit Nummy's Island again. At the stop across the bridge, we were able to find a YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON among the numerous BLACK-CROWNS. Dick Philian was able to pick out a MARBLED GODWIT from what seemed like a mile away. All were able to see and identify this bird. A little more searching turned up RUDDY TURNSTONE, SANDERLING, AMERICAN AVOCET and BLACK-BELLIED and SEMI-PALMATED PLOVERS. BROWN PELICANS,

terns and herons were still around in good numbers.

From Nummy's Island, we headed still further north to the Brigantine Unit of the Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, known affectionately as "The Brig" to birders. At the Brig we were able to view CATTLE EGRET, GLOSSY IBIS, VIRGINIA RAIL, HUDSONIAN GODWIT, SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER and many of the species seen previously including PEREGRINE FALCON, NORTHERN HARRIER, and many heron and waterfowl species. After the auto tour loop, we returned to Cape May.

Our last day consisted of a quick visit to the Brig before heading home. The birds here were much the same as they had been the day before though we were able to find STILT SANDPIPERS. After the tour loop, we bid each other farewell and headed home.

Our final list was just over ninety species. Despite weather that was great for humans but poor for birds, the participants remained upbeat throughout the trip and all seemed to have a good time. We'll hope to see some of them next year when we return to Cape May.

Cape May Trip Species List

Species	Site	Date	Comment
Double-crested Cormorant	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor
Brown Pelican	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Mute Swan	Cape May	09/19/02	Lily Lake
Canada Goose	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
American Wigeon	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Green-winged Teal	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Mallard	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
American Black Duck	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Northern Pintail	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows

Feathers



Species	Site	Date	Comment
Northern Shoveler	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Tricolored Heron	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Little Blue Heron	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Snowy Egret	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Great Blue Heron	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Great Egret	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Cattle Egret	Brigantine NWR	09/21/02	
Green Heron	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Yellow-crowned Night-Heron	Cape May	09/21/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Black-crowned Night-Heron	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
American Bittern	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Glossy Ibis	Brigantine NWR	09/21/02	
Turkey Vulture	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
Osprey	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Northern Harrier	Cape May	09/20/02	South Cape May Meadows
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Cooper's Hawk	Cape May	09/20/02	Higbee Beach
American Kestrel	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Merlin	Cape May	09/20/02	Higbee Beach
Peregrine Falcon	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Virginia Rail	Brigantine NWR	09/21/02	
Hudsonian Godwit	Brigantine NWR	09/21/02	
Marbled Godwit	Cape May	09/21/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Greater Yellowlegs	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Lesser Yellowlegs	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Spotted Sandpiper	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
Willet	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Ruddy Turnstone	Cape May	09/21/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Short-billed Dowitcher	Brigantine NWR	09/21/02	
Sanderling	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Least Sandpiper	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Pectoral Sandpiper	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Stilt Sandpiper	Brigantine NWR	09/22/02	
American Oystercatcher	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor
American Avocet	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Black-bellied Plover	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Semipalmated Plover	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Killdeer	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Ring-billed Gull	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Great Black-backed Gull	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Herring Gull	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Laughing Gull	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Casplan Tern	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Royal Tern	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Common Tern	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet



Feathers

V64N6
Page 93

Species	Site	Date	Comment
Forster's Tern	Cape May	09/19/02	South Cape May Meadows
Black Skimmer	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Rock Dove	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
Mourning Dove	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	Cape May	09/21/02	Higbee Beach
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Cape May	09/21/02	Higbee Beach
Belted Kingfisher	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Downy Woodpecker	Cape May	09/21/02	Higbee Beach
Northern Flicker	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Least Flycatcher	Cape May	09/20/02	Higbee Beach
Eastern Phoebe	Brigantine NWR	09/21/02	
Great Crested Flycatcher	Cape May	09/20/02	Higbee Beach
Blue Jay	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
American Crow	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
Fish Crow	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
White-eyed Vireo	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Philadelphia Vireo	Cape May	09/21/02	Higbee Beach
Red-eyed Vireo	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Cedar Waxwing	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
American Robin	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Gray Catbird	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Northern Mockingbird	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
Brown Thrasher	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
European Starling	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
Marsh Wren	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Carolina Wren	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Tree Swallow	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Purple Martin	Cape May	09/20/02	South Cape May Meadows
Carolina Chickadee	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Tufted Titmouse	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
House Sparrow	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	
American Goldfinch	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
House Finch	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Magnolia Warbler	Cape May	09/21/02	Higbee Beach
Palm Warbler	Cape May Point SP	09/20/02	
Black-and-white Warbler	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Mourning Warbler	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach - At the canal
Common Yellowthroat	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Yellow-breasted Chat	Cape May	09/22/02	Higbee Beach
Song Sparrow	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Savannah Sparrow	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Northern Cardinal	Cape May	09/19/02	Higbee Beach
Red-winged Blackbird	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Boat-tailed Grackle	Cape May	09/19/02	Stone Harbor/Hereford Inlet
Common Grackle	Cape May Point SP	09/19/02	



Field Trip Report

**Vischer Ferry
Sept. 21, 2002**

Nine birders joined us for a pleasant walk around the main eastern loop at Vischer Ferry. Only the large pond to the east of the bridge had any water. A single WOOD DUCK was spotted there, but many GREAT BLUE HERONS, two GREAT EGRETS and a GREEN-BACKED HERON were also seen. The tow path presented opportunities to observe poison ivy in its many forms and to enjoy its beautiful red fall plumage. The asters were also starting to bloom.

We saw several EASTERN PHOEBES in the woods and had a good time pinning down the identity of first a NORTHERN PARULA WARBLER and then an immature CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER. Also seen were RED-EYED and BLUE-HEADED VIREO, WOOD THRUSH and RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER.

In total we saw 30 species

— *Bernie and Chris Grossman*

Upcoming Audubon Programs

Monday January 6, 7 PM, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar
joint program with Capital Audubon
***In Search for The River of Grass*, Bob Neudel (see next page)**

Thursday January 9, 7 PM, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar
***West Nile Virus* - DEC's Ward Stone**

Thursday February 13, 7 PM, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar
***Hudson River Paddling Trip* - Alan Mapes**

Thursday March 13 . Location TBA.
***Cape Cod* Bob Budliger**



Upcoming HMBC Programs

WINTER WEATHER CANCELLATIONS. Reminder: The January, February and March 2003 HMBC Programs will all be held at Five Rivers at 7:00 PM. Unlike the library, there is no staff on duty in the early evening; nor does Five Rivers "close" in the evening in bad weather. Decisions as to program cancellation will be made by 1 PM on the day of the program. Decisions will be based on our estimation of the road conditions that evening, but please understand that the decision must be made early enough so that people can learn about the cancellation. If there is a MAJOR winter storm, with offices, malls, etc. closed, it is highly likely that the program will NOT be held. If it is a more moderate event, we may or may not hold it. You can call Five Rivers at 475-0291 between 1 PM and 4 PM the day of the program to find out.

DEER ALERT. Please use caution going to and from the programs this winter as there are MANY DEER in the vicinity of Five Rivers and the greater Delmar/Slingerlands area! Many HMBC members have had expensive collisions with these hooved creatures already!

Monday January 6, 7 PM, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar
In Search for The River of Grass, Bob Neudel (joint program with Capital Audubon)
In the Summer of 2001 Bob Neudel spent two and a half weeks visiting the Florida Everglades on an Albany Academy Sabbatical Program Sponsored by C. Woodrow Rea, Jr. '66 . Join Bob as he takes you on his search for the "River of Grass" as Marjorie Stoneman Douglas poetically described the unique Everglades. Bob will share his adventures through photography of the Everglades during the rainy season (during a period that over ten inches fell and he experienced the swelling of the "River"). Bob will also tie in a revisit in March during the dry season and topics that threaten the very existence of the Everglades today.

Monday February 3, 7 PM, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar
The decline of Spruce Grouse in the Adirondack Mountains from 1871-2002, John Ozard, NYS DEC

We'll take a journey to explore the current versus historical distribution and recent decline of Spruce Grouse in New York. Based upon anecdotal writings, museum specimens and both published and unpublished scientific literature, John will attempt to create maps of their range in New York comparing two time periods: 1871-1974 (historic) and 1976-2002 (recent). We'll explore possible reasons for the historical decline of Spruce Grouse and discuss results from three recent surveys: 1976-1980, 1985-1987, and 2000-2002.

Monday March 3, 7PM, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar
Alaska Birds, movies by Bill Gorman

Alaska is a large state with many remote areas. Bill's movies provide an introduction to birding in Alaska at the Yupik village of Gambell on St. Lawrence Island, the interior areas around Nome, the Aleut island of St. Paul of the Pribilof Islands, and the Denali National Park and areas south through the Kenai Peninsula. While these areas represent only a small fraction of the state, they provide a good exposure to the birds that may be seen here. Join Bill for his movie "Alaska Birds".



Program Reports

September Meeting: Hummingbirds

On a very hot September 9, Bill Gorman presented his movies on hummingbirds, which had been postponed by snow last winter. This was a highly received program, one of Bill's best cinematographic efforts (and they ALL have been excellent!). It was clearly a labor of love to shoot movies of so many of these tiny and elusive species. Bill showed us all of North America's hummingbirds, from the Ruby-throated of the East to the Broad-tailed of the Rockies, Texas' Buff-bellied and the many striking species of southeastern Arizona. Bill interjected many features of hummingbird biology and showed several species on the nest - and demonstrated his highly ethical approach of putting the birds - rather than the photos, first. We thank Bill for his knowledge and skill and most of all, his willingness to share it with us. We look forward to his next feature, Alaska Birds, in March of 2003.

October Meeting: US Best Birding Places

More than a dozen HMBC members shared their first-hand knowledge of some of the US' best birding places with their fellow club members in this unique workshop, "Birding the USA." From Maine to Florida to Alaska and Hawaii, presenters set up displays, photos, computers and maps and conversed one-on-one with the many participants - and fellow presenters, on some of their favorite sites. The only drawback was that the 2-hours seemed too little to visit with everyone and see all the places, but the presenters are good contacts for follow-up information. Many thanks to the presenters who made this a success, listed with their major areas of coverage:

Alan Mapes - Capes Cod and Cape May

Bill Lee - Massachusetts' islands

Bill Gorman - Arizona

Barb Putnam - Alaska

Bob Budliger - Colorado (with a focus on grouse)

David and Sandi Martin - Hawaii and the North-central US

Gregg Recer and Cathy Graichen: Louisiana Coast, Maine,

Denise and Scott Stoner - The Everglades, Dry Tortugas and Sanibel Island of Florida

Dale and Lillian Samuelson - Texas' Rio Grande Valley and South Coast; New Mexico

October Joint HMBC/Audubon Meeting: Crested Caracaras of Florida

Joan Morrison of Connecticut's Trinity College gave a fine presentation on the crested caracaras of Florida. Dr. Morrison studied this species' breeding biology and habitat use in Florida, where it is threatened due to loss of its pasture and grassland habitat due to agricultural and urban development. She and her colleagues studied its reproductive ecology, nest success, productivity, habitat use, home range and survival. She concluded that its future in the Sunshine State is both complex and uncertain, involving people, land use and economic issues. The cooperation of ranchers and scientists as well as land use agencies is essential given that most pairs of crested caracaras live on privately owned cattle ranches.

November Meeting: Sights and Sounds of a Southern Swamp

Alvah Sanborn has an interesting connection to Five Rivers, as he worked there (back then it was still the Game Farm) in the early 1940's before being drafted into WWII. Alvah focused on areas of southwest Florida including Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, Fakahatchee Strand State Park and the Big Cypress. He taught us about cypress "knees" and showed many of the plant and animal species of the cypress swamp. Much of this was accompanied with tape recordings including your program chair's favorite bird, the Limpkin! Other photos included Yellow-crowned night herons in a unique wing-extended, upside-down pose, coral bean, young alligators and much more. Perhaps most fascinating was a recording of Ivory-billed woodpecker, the subject of a much-publicized but unsuccessful recent search in the swamps of Louisiana. We thank Alvah for sharing his extensive knowledge and experience with us, and invite him to come back during the summer and spend some more time at Five Rivers.



Feathers

HMBC BOARD FOR 2002-2003

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East Greenbush, NY 12061
477-2980

Vice-President:

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Jr. Activities: Deb Smith 399-9007



HMBC Contact Information

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HMBC website: <http://hmbc.net>

Newsletter Submissions

Please send all *electronic* submissions *via e-mail* to:
Bob Miller at BobMiller.Troy@verizon.net

All *paper* submissions should be sent to:
Cathy Graichen
23 Scotch Mist Way
Malta NY 12020

Reminder !!

All HMBC Board meetings are open to all Club members. Meetings are held at Five Rivers Center or other local venues at 7:00 PM, usually on the second Monday of odd-numbered months.

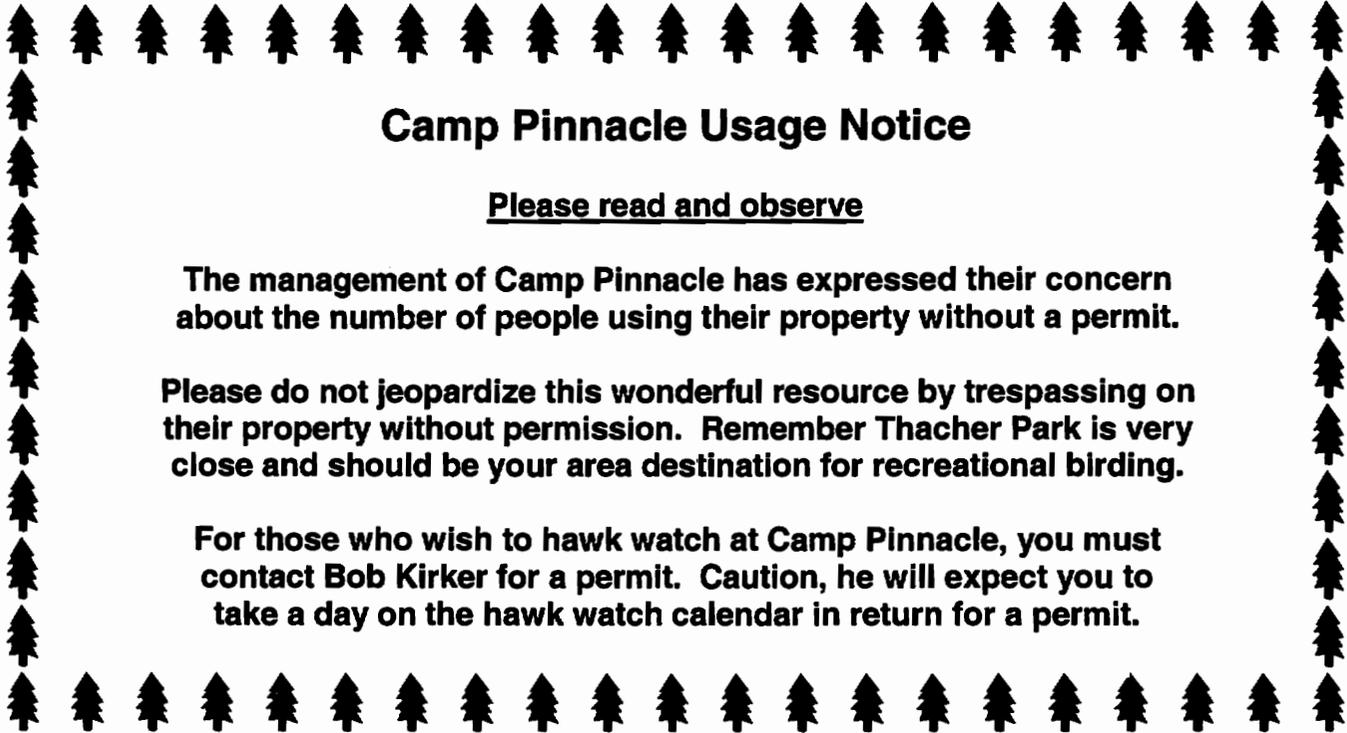
Next Board meeting:
January 13, Monday @ Five Rivers

Other Committee News

Deb Smith now heads the Junior Activities Committee

Carl George has taken the lead for the Reist Sanctuary Committee.

Thanks to these two for volunteering. We now have a full slate of committee chairs.



Camp Pinnacle Usage Notice

Please read and observe

The management of Camp Pinnacle has expressed their concern about the number of people using their property without a permit.

Please do not jeopardize this wonderful resource by trespassing on their property without permission. Remember Thacher Park is very close and should be your area destination for recreational birding.

For those who wish to hawk watch at Camp Pinnacle, you must contact Bob Kirker for a permit. Caution, he will expect you to take a day on the hawk watch calendar in return for a permit.

FEATHERS
Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club
c/o Five Rivers EEC
Game Farm Rd.
Delmar, N.Y. 12054

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