

Feathers

The Scarce, the Plentiful, and the Probable on our “Photobirding” Trip to Florida *by Larry King*

We recently returned from a couple weeks in early/mid April “photobirding” in Florida. While our observations in the Titusville-Merritt Island area are too limited in time and number of locations visited to draw any meaningful conclusions about any overall bird population changes, our observations may be helpful to other birders visiting that area.

First, let me advise you that we are not typical birders. We go there to photograph water birds and raptors (Ospreys and Eagles) in the wetlands. Maryde shoots stills, for making prints, while I shoot movies. We are not into “twitter birds” (passerines). We are saving them for when we get too old to go out for waterbirds.

Most of our effort was in the Titusville/Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge area (which partially surrounds the Cape Canaveral Kennedy Space Center), the Titusville “Blue Heron Water Reclamation Plant,” and the “Viera Wetlands,” a similar plant 20 miles further south.

In the past years, the Black Point Wildlife Drive in the Merritt Islands NWR has been very productive, although even then there have been times when we found very few birds the first time around and many birds a few hours later (after



the tide changed.) This year we did the drive twice, finding only a few herons and ibises, probably in part because some of the fresh water ponds had largely dried up.

Next we did the Bio Lab Road, which last year was very productive. First thing we found was an Osprey in a tree with a very no nonsense “don’t mess with me” look. (If a bluebird can have an angry look why can’t an osprey have a “don’t mess with me” look?) This road had a number of birds of interest including some tricolors and a reddish egret. In past years, the Bio Lab Road has had some Roseate Spoonbills, but none this year. Later we got to talking to

– article continues on Page 31

Inside This Issue...

Field Trip Reports.....	33
Upcoming HMBC Programs ...	35
A Birding Milestone on the Continental Divide	36
HMBC Annual Meeting and Banquet	38
Fifty Years of Colored Wings ...	39
Poetry Selections	40
Upcoming Field Trips.....	41

**HMBC BOARD
Officers**

President:

Bernie Grossman
7 Nott Rd.
Rexford, NY 12148
399-9159
bgrossman@nycap.rr.com

Vice-President:

Tom Williams
153A Consaul Road
Albany, NY 12205
857-2176
trwdsd@yahoo.com

Secretary:

John Hershey
15 Carriage Road
Clifton Park, NY 12065
371-3114
hersheyj@nycap.rr.com

Treasurer:

Ellen Pemrick
298 Vly Rd.
Niskayuna, NY 12309
452-4384
lnmp@nycap.rr.com

Directors

Carol Blackwell	238-3086
John Kent	426-7919 jwkent@verizon.net
Jory Lagner	439-0604 langnerj@earthlinkj.net
Patti Packer	399-4843 pattiac@nycap.rr.com
Elayne Ryba	312-7384 eryba@nycap.rr.com

Committee Chairs

Birdline:	Phil Whitney 477-9050 birdline@hmbc.net
Conservation:	Patti Packer 399-4843 pattiac@nycap.rr.com
Field Trips:	Donna Zimmerman 869-6624 fieldtrips@hmbc.net
Jr. Activities:	Steve Mesick Yugruguru@aol.com
Membership:	Dan Welch 477-2980 Dan@sweatventure.com
Programs:	Scott Stoner 785-6760 programs@hmbc.net
Publications:	Chris Grossman 399-9159 publications@hmbc.net
Publicity:	Ann B'Rells 355-5615 ann9br-hmbc@yahoo.com
Raptor Migration:	Gary Goodness 862-9260 Goodness@nycap.rr.com
Records:	(vacant)
Reist Sanctuary:	Michael Gann 377-2560 mgann@nycap.rr.com
Social:	Denise Hackert-Stoner 785-6760

President's Corner



Chris and I had a busy spring that included two long birding trips to Costa Rica and Bhutan. Both countries offer spectacular scenery and a strong commitment to conserving their unique ecosystems, flora, fauna, and cultures. While I haven't made a definitive count, I estimate that we saw over 725 new bird species.

While we were traveling, I was elected to another term as HMBC President. I offer my thanks to Gary Goodness for his service the past two years as president. Changes have also occurred on the Board of Directors and with committee chairs. I thank all the incumbents for their hard work, too. The departure of committee chairs leaves some important positions to fill. In particular, we need new heads of the Social, Field Trips, Junior Programs, Sam Madison Award, and Reist Sanctuary Committees. At this time, I know that Field Trips has a new leader, but I need to confirm this. If anyone is willing to serve in any of these positions, please let me know.

For most volunteer organizations, identifying and growing new leaders for the future is a critical problem. While HMBC is financially strong and has vibrant program offerings, it is not immune to the personnel issue. Much of the Board's efforts this year will involve dealing with this. Please join me (and the Board) in assuring the Club's future by offering to serve in one of these open spots.

— *Bernie Grossman*
President, HMBC 

HMBC Contact Information

BIRDLINE of EASTERN NEW YORK: (518) 439-8080

E-mail: contact@hmbc.net

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

HMBC Board Meetings

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

Newsletter Contributions Desired

- Have anything you think other birders would be interested in?
- Have a favorite birding spot you want to share?
- Are there any stories or photos that would inspire others?

Share them with the HMBC membership by submitting them to the addresses below:

Please send all *electronic* submissions *via e-mail* to: Chris Grossman at bgrossman@nycap.rr.com

Send **all** paper submissions to:

Chris Grossman
7 Nott Rd.
Rexford, NY 12148



a local birder who told us the cold spell last winter had been very hard on the spoonbills, freezing up the shallows where they feed.

Still hoping to find Spoonbills, we dropped in at the refuge headquarters and asked the ranger at the desk for any idea where we might find spoonbills. He suggested the Peacock Pocket Road, which goes through some great waterbird habitat. We found a few birds, but no spoonbills.

On another day, we teamed up with our friends Vern and Janet, who winter in Titusville. They took us into the Blue Heron Water Reclamation Plant, a great place for birds. The part of the plant where we find the birds is really at the end of a sewage treatment facility where

they take the effluent from a regular treatment plant and run it through a series of large lagoons. Plant life removes the excess nutrients from the water. These lagoons are rich in plant life and the creepy crawly things birds feed on. And the lagoons will always have adequate water as long as people keep flushing in Titusville. Here we found a good collection of birds, several herons, egrets and ibises, anhinga and cormorants and a few grebes. The plant is open to the public during working hours. You just have to sign in at the office.

But this year there were no wood storks or sand hill cranes at the Blue Heron so Vern took us down to the Viera Wetlands, about 20 miles south of Titusville. This is similar to

the Blue Heron plant, but had even more birds, including sandhills. In addition, you don't have to sign in. At one location there were some herons and anhingas nesting in the broken out tops of some palm trees. Vern was lucky enough to get a photo of a young anhinga (they are white) getting fed by a parent. Maryde got a shot of a sandhill with its chick.

Things were quite different at the last place visited: the St. Augustine Alligator Farm. My fascination with alligators was satisfied many years ago, but the alligator farm is a great place to see waterbirds. In the south, these birds have always chosen trees over alligator infested ponds because the gators block land based predators from raiding their nests. ►

That, plus a plentiful food supply makes the farm very attractive to the birds. Unlike Merritt Island, there seemed to be even more birds there than in previous years, including the only wood storks and spoonbills we saw this year. And the birds are

so acclimated to people that you see egrets nesting within 10 feet of the boardwalk over the alligator ponds. Overall, we came back with the feeling that there were not as many waterbirds as usual in Florida this year, not only at Merritt Island, but

on the beaches, at marinas and in roadside wet places and ponds. Could be because we were a couple of weeks later this year, or just a local effect. Anyhow, we throw our observation out for what it is worth. 🍃



Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve

April 17, 2011

Nineteen enthusiastic birders showed up on a Sunday evening at the main entrance of Vischer Ferry Preserve for this HMBC field trip, despite very windy conditions and predictions of scattered showers. Most of the group persevered until we finished around 8:30 pm despite rain and a dark, overcast sky even before dusk. The large numbers of ducks seen earlier in the month had already moved on from the Preserve but we did manage to find a few WOOD DUCKS, BLUE-WINGED TEAL, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, GADWALL, AMERICAN WIGEON, and RING-NECKED DUCK. Other highlights of the evening included an OSPREY, GREAT BLUE HERON, and a BANK SWALLOW. Before the entire group arrived three of us got to see a YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER near the parking lot.

By far the best bird of the evening for most of us, though, was the AMERICAN WOODCOCK and his Sky Dance. Fortunately for us, the rain stopped several minutes before the Woodcock began his amazing display at dusk. The Sky Dance is a term that was first used by Aldo Leopold in his Sand County Almanac. During the Sky Dance we heard another nearby Woodcock on the ground “peent-ing” while our performer was in the air, and when the performer landed he would “peent” back and forth with the other Woodcock that was clearly in his territory but not engaging in a flight display. No one was sure what this was about but one theory is that the other “peent-er” was a female admirer. An alternative theory might be that it was a competing male or perhaps a male helper of some kind.

Altogether we had a total of 27 species and a wonderful time was had by all!

— John Hershey

Peebles Island State Park Field Trip

Sunday, May 1, 2011

Sunday morning, May 1st was a perfect day for a birding walk. 33 birders assembled in the parking area under a sunny sky as a Baltimore Oriole and Warbling Vireo sang their morning song. The 80-foot American Sycamore tree that guards the entrance to Peebles welcomed us as we began the 3-mile trip around the island. The flood conditions of the Mohawk River removed the normal placid water for many of the birds common to the island. In spite of that loss, 40 species of birds were seen or heard. There were wonderful views of the YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, the most abundant bird. The BROWN THRASHER, GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER and the PILEATED WOODPECKER competed to see who could make the most noise. The event of the day was trying to accurately identify the raptor building a nest. From glimpses of the bird in dense forest, the COOPER’S HAWK was the best conclusion. A short summary of the birds:

CANADA GOOSE, MALLARD, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, SOLITARY SANDPIPER, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, PILEATED WOODPECKER, EASTERN PHOEBE, WARBLING VIREO, FISH CROW, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, CEDAR WAXWING, YELLOW WARBLER, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, BALTIMORE ORIOLE and AMERICAN GOLDFINCH.

— Gary Goodness

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve

May 8, 2011

Mother’s Day morning featured partly sunny skies, cool temperatures and light winds as eighteen birders took to the trails at the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve. Due to lingering flooding conditions in the back areas away from the towpath, we were unable to do a complete western loop, but our results were still favorable. The tally for the trip, I believe, was an even fifty species.

A pair of CANADA GEESSE with six goslings seemed to be an appropriate way to start off this holiday trek. Two YELLOW-THROATED VIREOS vocalized and gave splendid views just past the Whipple Bridge. BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHERS, GRAY CATBIRDS and the omnipresent YELLOW WARBLERS were all seen on the way out back towards the Mohawk River. A NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH was heard as well. A skyward look caught sixteen DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS flying westbound, in two loose formations. SOLITARY SANDPIPER was seen in the back left pond, as well as later in the flooded areas just inland from the river. As the group made the turn to the west, a tight group of five GREAT BLUE HERONS flew overhead going southward across the river. BALTIMORE ORIOLES were a popular sighting out back, as were ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAKS. An OSPREY was working the north side of the Mohawk, and a VEERY flew in low right through the middle of the group, giving fine looks. Other birds observed were CHIMNEY SWIFT, WARBLING VIREO, BROWN CREEPER, and for some in the group, a vibrant male SCARLET TANAGER. Warblers. Everyone wants to know about the warblers. Rather slow on the warbler front today. YELLOW, BLACK-THROATED BLUE, YELLOW-RUMPED, BLACK-THROATED GREEN, BLACK-AND-WHITE, AMERICAN REDSTART, NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, COMMON YELLOWTHROAT. ➤

That's all, folks. A persistent call that sounded very much like a Chestnut-sided turned out to belong to a YELLOW WARBLER doing an alternate song.

Perhaps the most interesting sighting of the day was a small, drab bird fairly high up, exhibiting flycatcher behavior. It was seen well by many; comments included "eye-ring", "lower bill yellowish", "faint wingbars", and "yellow wash underneath". As the minutes passed and we were about to leave this bird as "empidonax sp." it belied its oath of silence and pronounced, "che-bek". The group smiled and decided it had never worked harder for a LEAST FLYCATCHER.

Thank you to all of the participants for making for a very enjoyable outing. Special thanks to Gregg and Cathy, our trip leaders. Hope to see you all on future trips. Good birding!

— Tom Williams

Magee Marsh

May 9 - 11, 2011

We, and several friends (Gregg Recer, John Kent, and Tim Colborn), spent several days in early May birding Magee Marsh and nearby areas of Ohio. While the famed boardwalk at Magee (through only 7 acres of land) was crowded at times (think VERY crowded in spots - like the "bear jams" at Yellowstone National Park - where row after row of birders lined up to see CONNECTICUT and MOURNING WARBLERS), the birding was excellent and for the most part, the weather was good.

Highlights among the 27 warbler species we encountered included: CONNECTICUT, MOURNING, TENNESSEE, and NASHVILLE; PROTHONOTARY was seen going in and out of a nest hole. PHILADELPHIA VIREO was among the many species in that group; THRUSHES included many SWAINSON'S and at least one GRAY-CHEEKED, plus VEERY and WOOD. We had an AMERICAN WOODCOCK that appeared to be on a nest, and many

photo ops! Adjacent Ottawa NWR yielded GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER.

A trumpeting TRUMPETER SWAN flew overhead while at Maumee State Park, and Oak Openings Park south of Toledo produced SUMMER TANAGER, RED-HEADED WOODPECKER, and LARK SPARROW.

— Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

Pachaquack Preserve, Valatie

May 14, 2011

Ten birders rendezvoused at Pachaquack Preserve in Valatie this morning, under cloudy skies with a moderate breeze. Our walk along Kinderhook Creek, and return through an open woodland trail, took a little over two hours. We tallied 39 species, with one additional unidentified "empidonax species" (UFO flycatcher.)

The highlight along the creek, which is quite wide at this location, was at least two SPOTTED SANDPIPERS, who vocalized for the group too. A sharp-eyed birder also got us onto three COMMON MERGANSERS as well. Two CHIMNEY SWIFTS flitted overhead, and a NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW perched on a telephone wire for all to examine. An adult BALD EAGLE was briefly in view for some of the group.

Woodland birds included GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER, RED-EYED VIREO, WOOD THRUSH, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEEK, and BALTIMORE ORIOLE. WARBLERS detected were YELLOW, BLACK-THROATED GREEN, several American REDSTART, and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT.

A very pleasant morning walk. Thanks to everyone who participated. Several group members commented, after seeing the creek, that next time we should bring fishing poles and coolers. Who am I to argue?

— Tom Williams

Schodack Island State Park

May 15, 2011

Participants: 7
 Species seen: 34
 Weather: Rain/60F
 Park entrance fee: \$6.00
 Birding at a hotspot
 during spring migration: *priceless*

Seven soggy stalwarts slogged around Schodack Island State Park for three hours this morning. As usual, the most common species was AMERICAN REDSTART, of which we observed at least a dozen or more. Other species of interest included YELLOW-THROATED VIREO, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, VEERY (many), WOOD THRUSH, CEDAR WAXWING, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEEK, and BALTIMORE ORIOLE.

The warblers detected were: BLUE-WINGED (4), YELLOW (4), CHESTNUT-SIDED (2), CERULEAN, BLACK-AND-WHITE, AMERICAN REDSTART (12+), OVENBIRD (6), and COMMON YELLOWTHROAT (3).

A big thank you to everyone who persevered through unfavorable conditions. Please give the park a second shot in a week or so, under sunny, dry conditions. It will reward your efforts.

(Post-trip note: Colleen and I stopped at Staats Island Rd. on the way back from SISP. The DUNLIN were still there, along with SOLITARY, LEAST and SPOTTED SANDPIPERS. A WILLOW FLYCATCHER was heard along the creek. SAVANNAH SPARROWS were foraging in the recently turned over field as well.

— Tom Williams

Wet Feet: The Wild Life of America's Wetlands

Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

Monday June 6, 2011

7:00 p.m. at the Colonie Library

In this program of slides and poetry we explore the birds and plants of our wild, diverse and exciting wetlands. From northern bogs (where plants eat animals) to coastal marshes, from streams and lakes to great wooded swamps, each type is unique and beautiful. Home to orchids, sawgrass, and cypress; moose, herons, bitterns, and storks; we celebrate these vital places and the plants and animals that depend on them.

Scott is past president of both the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club and the Audubon Society of the Capital Region. Denise is a past officer and director of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. Scott's photography has been published in Birder's World Magazine and both Scott's and Denise's photos have appeared in the NYS Conservationist. Their photos have also been exhibited in local art shows. Denise's poetry and essays have appeared in local publications. Both Denise's and Scott's poems have been published in the Capital Region Poet's Magazine. Denise and Scott wrote a nature column for the Chatham Courier for several years, and have authored a feature article in the New York State Conservationist. Scott teaches continuing education bird courses for two local school districts. Together they have birded, explored, and photographed North America from Hawaii to Labrador.

A Year with Nature in Western New York

Tim Baird

Monday September 12, 2011

7:00 p.m. at the Colonie Library

Before the main speaker: Laurie LaFond of the Friends of the Washington County Grasslands IBA, a brief presentation on the Washington County Grasslands IBA and the new organization to protect it.

Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch

Andy Mason

Monday October 3, 2011

7:00 p.m. at the Colonie Library

Short-eared Owls

John Polunci

Monday November 7, 2011

7:00 p.m. at the Colonie Library

Holiday Party and Wintering Raptor Program

Monday December 5, 2011

7:00 p.m. at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

Learn about wintering raptors in the grasslands of the greater Capital Region; speakers will be from DEC and will cover results of surveys and volunteer opportunities for the upcoming winter. Speakers will include Theresa Swenson and Jenny Murtaugh of DEC. 



On a birding tour to Colorado in April, Denise Hackert-Stoner tallied her 600th ABA-area life bird: a WHITE-TAILED PTARMIGAN at Loveland Pass.

After spending several days viewing LESSER and GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKENS in the windy and relatively low grasslands of eastern Colorado, we ascended the Rockies

west of Denver. The road to the Pass was open, but there was deep snow all around. Catching our breath at 11,990 feet, we encountered some birders from Pittsburgh that already had the Ptarmigan in their scope. After everyone got a look, some of us climbed higher, stopping frequently to rest, to get a better view. The bird was nearly

pure white, up in the snow and grass on the rocky mountainside. Only its bill, and a tiny mark on its neck, was dark. Denise climbed up higher than I did, and was able to get the photo shown here. That evening we had a special celebration for this great milestone, achieved in an incredibly scenic place with such an impressive bird! Congratulations, Denise!

— Scott Stoner 



The 2011 HMBC Annual Meeting and Banquet was held on Wednesday evening, April 27, 2011 at the Century House in Latham. A total of 73 members and guests were in attendance. At the Business Meeting a total of 11 new members representing 7 households were officially inducted. The Sam Madison Award was not given this year. However, President Gary Goodness presented a Certificate of Recognition to Don Gresens for his “many contributions to the officers and members of HMBC”.

In addition, Gary Goodness presented the President’s Award to Bob Yunick, noting that Bob “is in a category by himself”. Bob joined the Schenectady Bird Club, the forerunner of HMBC, in 1950. His contributions to HMBC are too numerous to fully describe here,

however, it was noted that he was a former president of HMBC and the original editor of *Feathers* beginning in 1961. He has been the Century Run compiler for 41 consecutive years beginning in 1969. Bob has also been a leader in the field of bird banding, having co-authored *The Identification Guide to North American Passerines*, a guide for bird banding. He is a past president of the Northeastern Bird-Banding Association and the Eastern Bird Banding Association. Gary also noted the amazing fact that in his long career Bob has banded over 200,000 birds of 203 species. Bob was present to accept the award and make a few comments.

Gary Goodness, representing the Nominations Committee, presented the Committee’s new slate of HMBC officers:

President Bernie Grossman
 Vice-president Tom Williams
 Secretary John Hershey
 Treasurer Ellen Pemrick.

In addition, three Directors were nominated for first or second terms: Elayne Ryba, Carol Blackwell, and Jory Langner. No other nominations were introduced from the floor. The Officers and Directors were then elected in the meeting. In addition, two Directors will continue with their present terms: John Kent and Patti Packer.

Following dinner and the Business Meeting, Mark Garland presented a very informative and entertaining program, “Tropical Birds Do the Coolest Things”. Mark is a free-lance naturalist and former Senior Naturalist for the Cape May Bird Observatory.

– John Hershey 

*The softly-warbled song
Comes through the pleasant woods, and
colored wings
Glance quick in the bright sun, that
moves along
The forest openings.*

– Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,
An April Day, 1839

I know I was watching birds by the time I reached Junior High, and probably earlier. My mother was a casual birdwatcher, and it caught my fancy too. Barney Fowler wrote a weekly bird column in the *Knickerbocker News*, and he passed along reports of local bird sightings. I became a regular reader and sometimes contributor.

My parent's house backed up to a mature woodland, so even the backyard was a good place for birding. My earliest recollection is of the PILEATED WOODPECKERS that often appeared among the large oaks out back. Their visits were always exciting, and they remain one of my favorite birds.

I started my collection of bird guides with the 1962 printing of Peterson's *A Field Guide to the Birds*. It is the only guide I owned for a long time. My parents went to hear Roger Tory Peterson speak – I'm not sure why I was not included – and had my guide autographed. It is still here, a bit tattered and with a broken binding, and with jotted notes that bring back memories.

One of my early quests was thrushes. The forest behind our house was home to numerous WOOD THRUSHES, HERMIT THRUSHES, and VEERIES. I loved the musical call of the WOOD THRUSH, and the eerie, ethereal VEERY. Reports were dutifully sent to Mr. Fowler.

In those days I briefly recorded bird songs. My father had a tape recorder and microphone. I placed the microphone roughly at the focal point of a large aluminum bowl, and recorded thrushes and other birds. I thought it worked quite well.

During spring, 1962, I was astonished to discover warblers – to me, surprisingly colorful, often elusive little birds that flitted about in the brush and treetops in huge variety. My friend Millie and I would lie on my parents' garage roof scanning the tops of the oak trees, perfectly aligned for rooftop viewing. I spent the afternoons after school scouring the woodlands for new warblers, excitedly checking off each new discovery. YELLOW, BLACK-THROATED BLUE, MYRTLE (YELLOW-RUMPED), BLACK-THROATED GREEN, and BLACKBURNIAN – each was welcomed as a new friend.

My favorite warbler discovery was the BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, first encountered in Robin Hood Park on the hill above my grandmother's second apartment in Keene, New Hampshire. He was hopping around low down on a large pine, and his gentle call was unmistakable. Not long ago I enjoyed a wonderful few minutes following a BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER around a leaning birch tree with my spotting scope. Alas, his gentle call does not register to my aging ears.

Another exciting discovery in Keene was NIGHTHAWKS. My grandmother's first apartment was not far from downtown Keene, and I walked around the city a lot. In the evening the air was alive with their "peents." NIGHTHAWKS still remind me of warm nights and the sounds of the city. Chimney Swifts were another Keene discovery.

I don't travel to see new birds, but have always taken advantage of trips to keep an eye open for them. My parents liked to vacation in Maine, so I added some birds to my very informal list there – LEAST FLYCATCHER, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, CEDAR WAXWING, NASHVILLE WARBLER, and NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH. My most vivid memory of Maine, however, does not appear in my notes. I was walking from the woods into a small, sunlit field.

I was looking around when an odd noise right in front of me drew my attention, and there, brilliant in the sun, was a male RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, hovering about five feet away, appearing curious about me. One of many magical moments with birds that lingers in my mind.

In 1963 I joined a Keene YMCA trip camp to the southwest, and added new friends to the notations in Peterson's. In Garner State Park, Texas, I heard CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW and WHIP-POOR-WILL. Bottomless Lakes, New Mexico, produced my first WESTERN KINGBIRD, and Texas and Oklahoma featured many SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHERS and MOCKINGBIRDS. A WESTERN Tanager was seen on the north rim of the Grand Canyon, a PAINTED BUNTING in White River, New Mexico, and a LARK SPARROW in Springville, Utah. My search was hampered by a busy schedule and only having an eastern guidebook, but it was still fun.

My old Peterson's evokes many memories, and shows the value of taking notes, something I was never good at in later years. Until I looked, I would have said I'd never seen a RED-HEADED WOODPECKER, but there is a big check by it. Alas, unlike most of the check marks, no location is given. The notation by EASTERN PHOEBE made me smile, "Swanzy, NH, '62." The Phoebe was my mom's favorite bird, and my first record was made at her childhood home. It is on the one list I found from her childhood. One entry on that list puzzled me for a while, a Chebec, an old name for a LEAST FLYCATCHER.

Enjoying birds has always been an engaging pursuit, produced many fond memories, and been a relaxing diversion from a busy life.

– Alan French

The Dovekie

Elusive for many years
it was my nemesis bird
A tiny auk I could never see
Six inches at most
no neck, black top, white bottom
It breeds in Greenland and winters far at
sea.

Occasionally blown to shore,
reports from the coast not worth chasing
as it does not stay long

Then, a week before Christmas,
a Dovekie was sighted along the New
Hampshire coast
Amazingly it stayed...

We learned of it after four days
And began checking the reports
as we were headed up on
Christmas

Would it stay long enough?
Was that even possible?

Thursday still there
Friday still there...
Saturday we traveled.
A friend had it at 11; we got there at 2

We parked in the "right" spot
and checked every bird along the seawall.
Some close, some far
loons, grebes, scoters, more
but no Dovekie among them all

Were we too late once again?
To miss this tiny seabird by a few hours?
How could that be when this time we
were so close
to seeing this elusive seabird
that did not exist for me

Denise got cold
and returned to the car
I got cold, but stayed out there
watching, scoping
hoping against hope

Then the glare ended
a cloud blocked the sun
and a new area was viewable
farther to the south.

I looked down there and saw birds.
It was like something told me to check
there
A few dark birds in the waves
not far from the shore
but they were too big.
I was skunked once more

Then, in the froth of the waves
the white foamy surf close to shore
A tiny bird, black and white
Could it be? Could it truly be?
Almost certainly - a tiny Dovekie!

Calling to Denise
Running for the scope
then heading for a closer look
A squeal of joy
As my long quest was fulfilled!

Like a cork it bobbed in the sea
Again and again it dove for food
Down 15 seconds, up for only three

Only yards away now
A check off the list, true
But for me, far far more
An hour I watched it
learning its markings,
observing its habits
getting to know our new friend
A special Christmas present
This tiny Dovekie!

The Catbird

Small and gray
hidden in brush
the Catbird mews

"Are you a bird"?
"or are you a cat"?

They came in the summer
and ate raisins from our deck
Easily tamed,
they also ate from our hands.

If the larder was bare
they complained loudly
until we went out and fed them

On an outstretched hand
they took several raisins
before heading off -
to share with young?

The trust of this creature
on one's hand is precious
this small *catbird* a feathered friend

— Scott Stoner 

— Scott Stoner

JUNE

DYKEN POND

Saturday, June 4

Rensselaer County; morning

Coordinator: Tom Williams

857-2176

trwdsd@yahoo.com

Dyken Pond Environmental Center is located on the Rensselaer Plateau near Cropseyville. It is an elevated wet woodlands with a system of loop trails. It can be quite wet and buggy, so wear appropriate footwear and bring bug protection. Our hike will take us down to the edge of the pond, through thick woodlands, across the boardwalk of bog-like Dustin Swamp and back to the entrance road. Higher elevation warblers and songbirds can be expected here, along with the omnipresent Ovenbird.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Walmart Plaza on Route 7 (760 Hoosick Road) in Troy at the plaza entrance directly across the road from Dunkin' Donuts.

WINIFRED MATTHEWS HOLT PRESERVE

Sunday, June 5

Albany County; morning

Coordinators: David & Sandy Martin

765-4982

david@naturebits.org

The Holt Preserve is a small wooded preserve in the southern part of the town of New Scotland. We will be searching for breeding woodland birds in the preserve and for open-country birds in the surrounding fields. Hooded Warbler and Worm-eating Warbler have been found there in recent years. Trails may be muddy and one mail trail is steep. Meet at 7 a.m. at the CDTA Park & Ride at the corner of Elm Avenue and State Route 32 (Delmar By-pass) in Delmar. We will carpool to the preserve from there.

RESERVATIONS FOR DOODLETOWN RD.

Wednesday, June 8

DOODLETOWN ROAD

Saturday, June 11

Rockland County; morning –early afternoon

Coordinator: Tom Williams

857-2176

trwdsd@yahoo.com

Reservations by June 8

Doodletown was an isolated hamlet in the town of Stony Point, NY. Purchased by the Palisades Interstate Park Commission during the 1960s, it is now part of Bear Mountain State Park. For birders, it is renowned for the diversity and abundance of its species, especially warblers. Cerulean, Hooded, Blue-winged and Worm-eating are all present here along with the more common warblers. You might also expect both Black-billed and Yellow-billed Cuckoos, Indigo Bunting, Scarlet Tanager, Wood Thrush and several species each of vireos, flycatchers and swallows.

We should be at Doodletown between 8:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

We will meet at 5:30 a.m. at Colonie Center in Colonie with a return time of approximately 2:00 p.m. **Registration is required by Wednesday June 8** for this trip.

PAPSCANEE ISLAND PRESERVE

Sunday, June 12

Rensselaer County; morning

Coordinator: Don Gresens

370-3923

dgresens@nycap.rr.com

This field trip will take us to the different habitats of Papscaanee Island Preserve consisting of deciduous forest, cultivated farmland and freshwater marshes where we will see a variety of bird species. Swallows, herons and Wood Ducks can be observed in the wetland areas. Titmice, nuthatches and woodpeckers are found in the forest as well as Eastern Wood –Peewee and Great-crested Flycatcher. Veery, wood Thrush and American Redstarts are common. Other summer birds include Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Black and White and Blue-winged Warblers, Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the Kmart parking lot on Routes 9 and 20 in East Greenbush to carpool, since parking at the preserve is limited.

EMMA TREADWELL THACHER NATURE CENTER

Sunday, June 19

Albany County; morning

Coordinator: Ellen Pemrick

452-4384

lnmp@nycap.rr.com

The Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center is located near Thompson's Lake State Park in Albany County. The property offers trails through diverse habitats including woodlands, meadows and fields. Nesting Tree Swallows and House Wrens are usually among the first birds we see. We also have found Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting and Bobolink in past years. Depending on weather conditions, we will walk multiple trails in search of warblers, flycatchers, thrushes and other species.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the larger parking area to the right of the main building.

CHERRY PLAIN STATE PARK

Saturday, June 25

Rensselaer County; morning

Coordinators: Phil & Marge Whitney

477-9050

philandmarjwhitney@

earthlink.net

Cherry Plain State Park is situated on the Rensselaer Plateau of the Capital District. The relatively high elevation, cool climate and a variety of forested and wetland habitats make this a good area for northern species. Nesting species include Least Flycatcher, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Scarlet Tanager, Common Raven, Broad-winged Hawk, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Black and White and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Veery, Hermit Thrush and Winter Wren also nest here.

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Hannaford parking lot on the right side of Route 43 just past the intersection of Route 150 in West Sand Lake to carpool to the park. ➤

JULY**BIRDING SCHOHARIE COUNTY**

Sunday, July 2

morning

Coordinator: Tom Williams
857-2176
trwdsd@yahoo.com

We will spend the morning visiting sites that will introduce participants to a variety of habitats and the resident birds of these Schoharie County sites. Corbin Hill Road Marsh is home to rails, herons and flycatchers. Max V. Shaul State Park hosts a diverse group of woodland birds including several warbler species. Burnt-Rossman Hills State Forest has stands of pure evergreen species along with the higher elevation summer birds including thrushes and warblers. We will also stop at the NY Power Authority site visitor center observation area in North Blenheim before continuing on to the nature trail there.

Meet at 6:30 a.m. in the Colonie Center parking lot near Sears Auto Center on the Wolf Road side

H. G. REIST SANCTUARY

Sunday, July 10

Schenectady County: morning

Coordinator: Don Gresens
370-3923
dgresens@nycap.rr.com

Join us at the club's sanctuary to look and listen for summer and year-round resident species and to try to add new species to the sanctuary's bird list. The sanctuary is a woodland habitat, so woodland species are the highlight of this trip. Several species of thrushes, flycatchers, vireos and warblers as well as woodpeckers, wrens, Scarlet Tanager, tufted Titmouse and Black-capped Chickadees have been observed here. The walk is on easy, level trails.

Meet at the parking lot at the Hummingbird Manor entrance on Oakmont Street in Niskayuna at 8 a.m.

AUGUST**RESERVATIONS FOR NOBLEWOOD PARK / AUSABLE MARSH WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA**

Monday, August 1

NOBLEWOOD PARK / AUSABLE MARSH

Saturday, August 6

Essex and Clinton Counties; all day

Coordinator: Tom Williams
857-2176
trwdsd@yahoo.com

Reservations by August 1

Noblewood Park is located in Willsboro on the shores of Lake Champlain. Habitats include thick hemlock dominated woods, sandy soils and pitch pines and a sand spit at the mouth of the Boquet River. Some woodland birds should still be present, but the real focus is to observe the species that collect along and at the river/lake junction. Swallows, Bald Eagles and Osprey are likely here. Migrant shorebirds on their southward journeys may stop here. Colonial such as Bonaparte's Gull, Caspian Tern and Double-crested Cormorants congregate here as well.

Time permitting, we will bird along the entrance road to the campground at Ausable Marsh Wildlife Management Area in Peru. Osprey nesting towers here have been utilized successfully each year and herons and marsh wrens also favor this area.

We will meet at 6:30 a.m. in the Colonie Center parking lot near Sears Auto Center on the Wolf Road side.

PEEBLES ISLAND STATE PARK / COHOES FLATS

Sunday, August 28

Saratoga/Albany Counties; morning

Coordinator: John Hershey
371-3114
hersheyj@nycap.rr.com

The wooded areas of Peebles Island are good for a variety of songbirds including some of the migrant warblers. The river area and rocky flats around the island are usually good for Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Bald Eagle as well as sandpipers, yellowlegs, herons, egrets, Chimney Swifts and ducks.

From the meeting place, we will check out the Cohoes Flats and then consolidate vehicles before proceeding to Peebles Island since there is a \$6 fee for each car there.

Meet at the NY State Dam Recreation area behind the U-haul Rental in Cohoes at 8 a.m. From I-787 going north, turn right onto Route 470 (Ontario Street) in Cohoes. Then turn left onto Clark Avenue and proceed to the end.

SEPTEMBER**RESERVATIONS FOR MONTEZUMA WETLANDS COMPLEX**

Saturday, September 4

HAWK WATCHING AND SONGBIRDS IN THE HELDERBERG ESCARPMENT #1 PINNACLE

Saturday, September 10

Coordinator: Gary Goodness
862-9260
goodness@nycap.rr.com

We'll first explore the trails of Camp Pinnacle for fall migrants, then head out to "Sunset" the hawk watching site to search the skies for Broad-winged Hawks and other migrating raptors. Meet in front of the bank at the southwest corner of Routes 20 and 155 in Guilderland at 8:00 a.m.

MONTEZUMA WETLANDS COMPLEX

Sunday, September 11

Out of area; all day

Coordinator: John Hershey
371-3114
hersheyj@nycap.rr.com

Local Leader: Matt Medler

Reservations by September 4. Limit 14 people

This day trip to the Montezuma Wetlands Complex located between Syracuse and Rochester is a great opportunity to find a variety of species that are rare or hard to find in our own region. Shorebirds will be a major attraction with the possibility of up to 30 different species including Buff-breasted Sandpiper and American Golden Plover. We can also expect to see a large number of herons, waterfowl and raptors. This trip is limited to 14 participants because of the need for a vehicle caravan through the area. Contact the coordinator to make reservations and for further details about carpooling.

HAWK WATCHING AND SONGBIRDS IN THE HELDERBERG ESCARPMENT #2 HIGH POINT

Saturday, September 17
Coordinator: Gary Goodness
862-9260
goodness@nycap.rr.com

We will bird our way out to the hawk watching area, looking for migrating passerines along the 1.5 mile trail out to High Point. There, we will look for Broad-winged Hawks and other migrating raptors. Meet in front of the bank at the southwest corner of Routes 20 and 155 in Guilderland at 8:00 a.m.

HUYCK PRESERVE/MYOSOTIS LAKE

Saturday, September 24
Albany County; morning
Coordinators: David & Sandy Martin
765-4982
david@naturebits.org

Join us to search for migrant shorebirds and songbirds at the Huyck Preserve near the hamlet of Rensselaerville. The main attraction in the fall is Myosotis Lake. The lake's level usually drops in late summer exposing the mudflats that attract migrant shorebirds and, in many years, American Pipits. We may have to walk on the mudflats to get good looks at the birds, so come prepared to walk in soft mud. After searching the shoreline, we will walk some of the trails through the surrounding hardwood-hemlock forest looking for migrants and other woodland birds. Aside from one steep section, the trails are fairly level, but they are uneven in places and may be muddy.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the New Scotland Town Hall on State Route 85 in New Scotland. We will carpool to the preserve from there. Email the coordinator if you plan to attend.

OCTOBER PINE BUSH PRESERVE – WILLOW ST. ENTRANCE

Saturday, October 1
Albany County; morning
Coordinator: Don Gresens
370-3923
dgresens@nycap.rr.com

We will explore some of the trails in the "Great Dune" area of the Pine Bush. This section of the pine barrens is southwest of the Discovery Center and north of Route 20. This area is more forested than the area around the Discovery Center and has a stream running through it. We should see some late migrating songbirds of both wooded and scrub barrens. Prairie Warbler and Eastern Towhees are common if they haven't left for warmer climes. Sparrows are common with Field Sparrows in abundance.

Meet at 8 a.m. in front of the Bank at the southwest corner of Routes 20 and 155 in Guilderland.

SARATOGA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK AND BATTLEFIELD

Sunday, October 2
Saratoga County; morning
Coordinators: Ellen Pemrick
452-4384
lnmp@nycap.rr.com
Marne Onderdonk
583-8841
marne-esq@nycap.rr.com

This popular trip features beautiful foliage and a good chance of hawks, woodpeckers, sparrows, bluebirds and late migrants as we walk the woods and grasslands of the battlefield. You never know what will turn up. Please note that a fee is charged to walk the Wilkinson Trail, payable at the visitor center.

Meet at 9 a.m. in the parking lot near the park's visitor center off State Route 32.

FIVE RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

Sunday, October 9
Albany County; morning
Coordinator: John Kent
426-7919
jwkent@verizon.net

We'll walk about 2 miles over generally flat terrain with some small hills, passing through a variety of habitats. Previous trips have come up with 6 species of sparrows and 5 species of woodpeckers as well as both species of kinglets. Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Wood Duck and perhaps other waterfowl may be present. Wet grass and muddy spots may be encountered.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot by the visitor center.

WOODLAWN PRESERVE

Saturday, October 15
Schenectady County; morning
Coordinator: Don Gresens
370-3923
dgresens@nycap.rr.com

The Woodlawn Preserve is located in the Southeast corner of Schenectady County abutting the western edge of the Pine Bush. The area contains a flood control pond, forested sand dunes and general wetland habitat. Previous trips have come up with 6 species of sparrows and 5 species of woodpeckers as well as both species of kinglets. Great Blue and Green Herons, Wood Duck and perhaps other waterfowl can be found on the pond. Hopefully, weather could provide us with some late migrating warblers along with some sparrow family birds.

Meet at 8:00 am in front of Barnes & Noble in Mohawk Commons on the corner of State Street and Balltown Road in Niskayuna. We will carpool the short distance to the preserve. 

Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club
c/o Five Rivers EEC
Game Farm Road
Delmar, NY 12054

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 186
SCHDY NY 12305

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

