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# Feathers

## **NORTHERN ADVENTURES IVB GAMBELL, ST LAWRENCE ISLAND AND NOME, ALASKA May 25 – June 5, 2012** by Bernie Grossman

The first part of this article (*Feathers*, October, 2012) described my stay at Gambell on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea. As I mentioned, the gravel/sand surface of the island had made walking very difficult and badly affected my knees, and I had asked to go to Nome with a part of the Gambell group. We left for Nome on June 1 after the Bering Air flight had dropped off the new people coming in for the second portion of the Gambell stay. . In Nome, we were met by Aaron Lang, an experienced Wilderness Birding Adventures guide with whom we had traveled previously. Aaron lives in Homer, Alaska, and he is amazingly familiar with Alaskan birding.

We lodged at a local boarding house and, after dropping off our stuff, headed out birding. Nome is located on the southern side of the Seward Peninsula and is a regional administrative center with about 3000 year round residents. The town is located in the permafrost zone, so most of the more recent buildings are built on pilings set into the earth. This prevents the permafrost's melting and the buildings' sinking and tilting. It was interesting to see the huge new regional hospital up on stilts.

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## President's Corner

This Feathers mailing includes the Club's trip schedule for 2013 as prepared by the field trip committee. The committee chair, Don Gresens, was assisted by Colleen and Tom Williams, John Hershey, Bill Lee, and me. We met several times to review this year's trips and to generate the coming year's schedules. I offer my thanks to the committee for their effort and to the trip leaders for volunteering again.

As has been our practice for the last few schedules to alternate distance trips, we are not offering trips to Cape Ann, Cape May, or Jamaica Bay, but these will be returning in 2014. It turns out that Jamaica Bay NWR was seriously damaged by Hurricane Sandy, so we will have to wait for reports of its condition and repair before scheduling it again.

Some new trips are added, too. I'm leading a trip in early February around the Northumberland agricultural area in search of winter visitors, and I will lead a walk along the Roosevelt Truck Trail in November. The Truck Trail is located off Route 28N just north of the Boreas River bridge. It goes through a boreal spruce forest and offers a chance to see boreal specialties. Tom Williams and Dave Harrison are leading a walk along a path to Botheration Pond near Gore Mountain with the hopes of seeing forest birds on breeding territories. Tom is also leading a trip to the Perch River NWR north of Watertown to look for uncommon marsh and water birds such as Black Tern and Least Bittern.

The committee is always looking for new and interesting places to bird. If you know any, please contact Don Gresens or other committee members. We also need to bring on new trip leaders. One doesn't need to be an expert birder to do this. What we need to do is to assure that the Club's collective knowledge of the good spots to bird is passed along. Please volunteer.

I wish everyone a good, healthy and happy New Year as well as a year of productive birding.

- *Bernie Grossman*  
*President, HMBC*

### 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:

***HMBC Contact Information***  
**BIRDLINE of EASTERN NEW YORK:**  
**E-mail:** [contact@hmbc.net](mailto: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 or other local venues at 7:00 pm, usually on the second Monday of odd-numbered months.

Please send all electronic submissions via e-mail to: Chris Grossman at [bgrossman@nycap.rr.com](mailto:bgrossman@nycap.rr.com). Send all paper submissions to:

**Chris Grossman**  
**7 Nott Rd.**  
**Rexford, NY 12148**

## New Fee for Printed *Feathers* Copies

The HMBC Board of Directors voted at its regular September meeting to impose an additional fee of \$12 per year to the regular dues for any member wishing to receive a hard copy of *Feathers*. The fee will include the annual trip list and will be on the dues notice sent in February, 2013.

## Passing of Paul Conner

Paul Conner, a long time member of HMBC, passed away on September 5 of this year. He is survived by his wife, Marty, who also has a long association with HMBC. For many years Paul was participant and leader of the South Rensselaer Christmas Count. He will be greatly missed.

## Field Trip Reports

### **Saratoga Battlefield**

*September 23, 2012*

An amiable mix of old and new members participated in the HMBC field trip at Saratoga Battlefield, a/k/a Saratoga National Historical Park, on Sunday, Sept. 23rd. In contrast to the deluge of rain we endured last year, we enjoyed near-perfect weather, with partly-cloudy skies and temperatures in the 60s.

The first birds of the day, just outside the Visitor Center, were AMERICAN GOLDFINCH and EASTERN PHOEBE. Shortly after that, we had some excitement as YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO was spotted in the foliage. The first half-mile or so of the Wilkinson Trail and several of the trail's wooded sections proved to be productive for warblers. We wisely followed the old adage, "Where chickadees call, warblers in fall" when looking for these colorful migrants. The list of warbler species found throughout the way included MAGNOLIA, BLACK-THROATED BLUE, BLACK-THROATED GREEN, BLACK-AND-WHITE, and possible CHESTNUT-SIDED, as well as multiple CFWs (Confusing Fall Warblers) that disappeared before we could identify them. Also found in the mixed flocks were several BROWN CREEPERS, BLUE-HEADED VIREO, and a young (or female) SCARLET TANAGER.

Raptors were limited; we had excellent looks at AMERICAN KESTREL, soaring TURKEY VULTURES, and later in the day, a possible NORTHERN HARRIER. Surprisingly, the only sparrows we saw were SONG SPARROWS, and we failed to find a single EASTERN BLUEBIRD, though we did hear one call. Aside from robins, we had no other thrushes.

Other notable species included COMMON RAVEN, CEDAR WAXWING (flocks flying overhead - no close-ups), EASTERN WOODPEWEE, and RED-EYED VIREO. And yes, we did have a Woodpecker Six-Pack, with DOWNY, HAIRY, RED-BELLIED, and PILEATED WOODPECKERS, NORTHERN FLICKER, and YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER.

If I counted correctly, the total came to 38 species.

-Ellen Pemrick

### **Woodlawn Preserve**

*October 13, 2012*

Six frosty birders ventured into Woodlawn Preserve Sat am. It was an active morning for seedeaters. Entering the preserve a flock of WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS greeted the group. Moving on to the "pond" REDWING BLACKBIRDS were chipping and singing. Waterfowl was totally absent from the "pond". No Canada Geese, no Mallards no nothing. As the sun warmed the fields, sparrows started to appear. We had flocks of WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS mixed with SONG SPARROWS, CHIPPING SPARROWS, JUNCOS, BLUEBIRDS, HOUSE FINCH and a couple of EASTERN PHOEBES. There was enough activity to keep the group at one spot for 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Also seen along the walk were GOLDEN-CROWNED and RUBY-CROWNED KINGLETS, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS, great looks at BLUE-HEADED VIREOS and the resident REDTAILED HAWKS. All together 34 species were identified.

- Don Gresens

## Field Trip Reports *(continued)*

### Vischer Ferry Nature Preserve

**November 18, 2012**

There was an excellent turnout of 15 congenial birders for the HMBC Field Trip this morning at Vischer Ferry. Because the ponds at the main entrance were iced up, we started at the Vischer Ferry Power Plant where we found 5 GREATER SCAUP, 5 BUFFLEHEAD, and 1 BLACK SCOTER. At Ferry Dr. we had a HOODED MERGANSER and 3 COMMON MERGANSERS in the river. Then back to the main entrance along the towpath west, concentrated in a few spots of open water we found at least 5 GADWALL, 1 NORTHERN PINTAIL, and 1 WOOD DUCK. Other highlights included AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS, 1 GREAT BLUE HERON, 2 RED-TAILED HAWKS, BELTED KINGFISHER, PILEATED WOODPECKER, BROWN CREEPER, and EASTERN BLUEBIRD. Our final bird count was a respectable 37 species.

- John Hershey

## Upcoming HMBC Programs

### HMBC Holiday Party & Program at Five Rivers

#### Magee Marsh - Warbler Mecca

**Speaker: Ken Harper**

December 3, 2012 - 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Five Rivers

Magee Marsh is located in Ohio on the shores of Lake Erie. It is part of a large area of wetlands and waterways that provide habitat and shelter for many species of waterfowl and songbirds both in migration and resident. During early May the Magee Marsh area provides a critical feeding and resting area for over 150 species of migrating songbirds including 36 species of warblers which the area has become famous for. Birders and Photographers "migrate" to the area in early May along with the birds to see this phenomenon. The warblers have become the main attraction here and have given way to Magee Marsh being called the "Warbler Capital" of the US.

Ken first traveled here in 2011 and was amazed at the number of warblers that he saw and the fact that most were at eye level making seeing and photographing them easier. He decided to return again this year and this program will be a photo essay of the combination of those two trips.

We will also discuss upcoming Christmas Bird Counts. Feel free to bring a dessert to share!

Ken is a Nature Photographer living just outside of Jonesville, NY. He is a retired IT professional and spends much of his spare time photographing various aspects of nature. He enjoys photographing landscapes, trees, flowers and wildlife in general but has developed a particular fondness for bird photography and has done much of that over the last 7-8 years. He is a member of HMBC and feels that the mentoring he has received from many club members has made him a better

## Upcoming HMBC Programs *(continued)*

bird photographer by having a better understanding of birds' habits and habitats. Ken does much of his photography in upstate NY but has traveled to other states and countries and has pursued his hobby in those areas also. Most of his photography is done with Nikon and Sigma equipment.

### **Birding Gambell and Nome, Alaska**

**Speaker: Bernie Grossman**

January 7, 2013 - 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Colonie Public Library

St Lawrence Island is located in the Bering Sea 40 miles east of Russia and 170 miles west of Nome, Alaska, with Gambell, a small Yupick native community, situated in the northwest corner. During a four week period in late May/early June, Gambell is a mecca for birders seeking sightings of Eurasian migrants who have wandered there. Bernie's talk describes the unique birding experience there and the culture of the community that he visited.

Because he had to walk everywhere over a gravel/sand covered terrain that badly affected his knees, Bernie had to cut short the time at Gambell and join the part of the tour that traveled back to Nome for four days of birding. In early June, Nome and the tundra areas of Alaska are alive with returning birds that quickly breed and raise their young before heading south. Bernie will describe what he saw including the landscape, mammals and birds.

Bernie Grossman has lived in the Capital District for almost 40 years. A retired scientist, he is currently Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club president. He and his wife, Chris, have birded extensively in North America and the world and have given talks covering their travels.

### **Nature at Your Doorstep: Birding the Capital Region and Beyond**

**Speakers: Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner**

February 4, 2013, 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Colonie Public Library

If you think you have to travel to the far corners of the earth to explore the beauty of the natural world, think again! Join us for this photo tour of birding sites in the Capital Region and beyond.

We'll enjoy the many birds, both rare and common, from our own backyard to such local hotspots as Five Rivers, Vischer Ferry, the Albany Pine Bush, Mohawk and Hudson Rivers, Fort Edward Grasslands, and more. We'll also 'venture' a few hours away to the Adirondacks, Lake Champlain, and Jamaica Bay. As we share some of the many birds that breed, winter, and pass through our area, we'll also enjoy a sampling of our region's flowers, butterflies, mammals, reptiles and amphibians. So come and watch, then get out and enjoy nature right in our own region!

## Upcoming HMBC Programs *(continued)*

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 Bird Club. They have birded and photographed from Labrador to Hawaii, but love spending time in the field (and at home) with their cameras here in the Capital Region. Collectively, their photography has been published in *Birder's World Magazine*, the *NYS Conservationist*, and the *Loudonville Spotlight*. They have given a wide variety of natural history programs all over the Capital Region and beyond, including to bird clubs, Audubon chapters, garden clubs, and senior centers. Scott teaches continuing education birding classes for several local school districts.

Their photos have been exhibited in a number of local galleries including the Arts Center of the Capital Region, the Broadway Arts Center in Albany, Professor Java Coffee Sanctuary in Colonie, the Hagaman Art Show, and the Friends of the IBA Juried Art Show in Glens Falls. They have won awards for their work in several venues, including first and second places in the Colonie Library photo contest in 2012. Their work is on exhibit in the Stedman Room of the Colonie Library during the month of January 2013

## Upcoming Audubon Programs

*Unless Otherwise Specified, All Programs To Be Held At:*

**William K. Sanford Colonie Town Library**  
**629 Albany-Shaker Road, Loudonville, NY 12211**

**The Bald Eagles of New York State**

**Speaker: Dr. Peter Nye**

Dr. Peter Nye is retired from DEC. During his time there, he was in charge of restoring the bald eagle to New York State. Come and hear an exciting and informative talk from someone who genuinely cares about bald eagles and who is an expert in their behaviors and status.

## On Nature

**Why Do a Christmas Bird Count?**

*by Denise Hackert-Stoner and Scott Stoner*

It's cold. It's the darkest time of the year. Probably the wind is blowing, and maybe it's even snowing. You're probably very busy shopping, decorating, baking, entertaining, and being entertained. So there are quite a few reasons to not

## On Nature *(continued)*

commit an entire day to birding at this time of year. But if you will allow us a few short paragraphs, we will try to convince you to do just that by joining one of our local Christmas Bird Counts this year!



**HMBC members on a CBC, Tina Markopoulis, Patti Packer and Scott Stoner**

- First, we can promise that you will not be doing any of the following during your chosen Christmas Count: waiting in line, jostling for a parking space, staring at your computer screen, and spending loads of money. The weather may not be warm, but you will have the pleasure of a bracing winter day outdoors. Not a mall in sight!
- Second, instead of listening to “Santa Baby” for the 150<sup>th</sup> time on commercial radio, you could be treated to the trill of the waxwing, the whisper of the bluebird, the call of the Blue Jay; and if you’re willing to brave the gathering dark, perhaps the whinny of the screech owl and the hoot of the Great Horned Owl!
- Third, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you are contributing to the body of data collected by your fellow birders throughout North America. This data has been useful in tracking trends in avian populations for over a century now. National Audubon cites an example of how data collected in the Christmas Bird Count over the years has directly benefitted birds: in the 1980’s the data showed a steady decline in wintering American Black Duck. Because of this data, conservation measures were enacted to decrease hunting of this species. Other benefits are documented as well; see <http://birds.audubon.org/christmas-bird-count>.
- Fourth, you may end up with a great story to share at your holiday gatherings, and for many years after. Our little group of counters still talks about how exciting it was to discover a Dickcissel at the feeders at Five Rivers during one Christmas Count, seeing 3,300 American Robins at Five Rivers, or a Great Horned Owl with a rabbit it could barely lift along Onesquethaw Creek! We also often reflect on the bemused expressions on the faces of the holiday partiers at the South Albany Airport in Bethlehem, when we asked permission to bird the runways during a driving snowstorm!
- Finally, many of the counts end with a compilation dinner, which provides a chance to get together with other counters, have a warm meal, and share the results of the day. Who knows, you might even add a new species to the collective history of the count!

## On Nature *(continued)*

Now that (hopefully) you've been convinced of the value and fun in the Christmas Bird Count, you'll be pleased to know that our own Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club sponsors three of them! To join one of the groups all you need to do is contact one of our coordinators:

- December 22, 2012: Schenectady County Count: Larry Alden,
- December 29, 2012: Southern Rensselaer County Count: Phil Whitney,
- January 5, 2012: Troy Count: Larry Alden

In addition, if you are free on December 16, our local Audubon Society of the Capital Region sponsors the Albany County Count, to take place on December 16, 2012, and coordinated by Alan Mapes.

If you can't spare a day to venture out into the field, and live within one of the 15-mile diameter circles of the above counts, you can contribute observations from your feeders. Again, please contact the compiler for the count in your area.

We are always pleased to welcome new participants. Many eyes are better than few, so both novice and experienced birders are more than welcome to join in! So join us by contacting one (or more!) of our coordinators. Then bundle up, grab your binoculars, and head out to count birds!

Happy Holidays to all,  
Denise Hackert-Stoner and Scott Stoner

## NORTHERN ADVENTURE IVB *(continued)*

Nome birding occurs primarily along three roads that radiate out from town. Council Rd. goes east along the ocean for about twenty miles before turning north and inland into the hilly tundra. Its most famous feature is Safety Sound, an inlet that feeds a large area of brackish lakes and marshes. The bridge that crosses the inlet is an important birding point, while a roadhouse just before the bridge is the last check point on the Iditarod sled run. One can often see people mining gold from the sands of the beaches, and many fishing camps are located along the road, too.

The Teller Road heads west out of town toward the native community of Teller about seventy miles away. This road passes through the hilly tundra somewhat more inland than does the Council Road. We went about 50 miles out the road and saw few dwellings once we left town. Finally, the Kougarak Road runs north and was the main route to an old gold mining town. The terrain is mostly tundra-covered hills with few buildings seen past the town. There is a state campsite on a large lake near the road about 30 miles in. Most birding tours go out to Mile 72 to a hill across from another often called Coffee Dome for obscure reasons. Birders hike about 0.5 miles up the hill in search of WHIMBREL and BRISTLE-THIGHED CURLEW. The latter is considered one of the five hardest North American birds for a birder to see.

As mentioned above, the Council Road goes east along the ocean for about twenty miles before turning inland, and we drove out it to a point just past the Safety Sound Bridge. Along the shore, we saw COMMON EIDER as well as a small flock

## NORTHERN ADVENTURE IVB *(continued)*

of beautiful SPECTACLED EIDER. Other ocean ducks included RED-BREADED MERGANSERS and LONG-TAILED DUCKS. The most common loon was the RED-THROATED (Figure 1), although we did see a PACIFIC fly by. The ponds and lakes on the inland side of the road held AMERICAN WIDGEON, NORTHERN PINTAIL, GREATER SCAUP, and GREEN-WINGED TEAL.



**Figure 1 Red Throated Loon**

As expected, gulls were common along the shore. The most frequent were the GLAUCCOUS and MEW GULLS. There were a few of the VEGA form of the HERRING GULL as well as BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKES. The COMMON TERNS were more frequently seen than the ALEUTIAN TERN. The latter seemed to mostly hang around the Safety Sound Bridge. It was a pleasant surprise, too, when a SABINE'S GULL flew past mixed in with a flock of COMMON TERNS. All three species of jaeger, PARASITIC, POMARINE, and LONG-TAILED were also seen.

June is the time to see the shorebirds arriving on the tundra, and we had some excellent sightings along the Council Road. These included BAR-TAILED GODWIT; BLACK TURNSTONE; SEMIPALMATED, WESTERN, ROCK, and PECTORAL SANDPIPERS; DUNLIN; LONG-BILLED DOWITCHER, RED-NECKED STINT, and many RED-NECKED PHALAROPE. We also saw PACIFIC GOLDEN-PLOVER along the lower, wetter grass and marshes. We had to drive to higher and drier country on the Kougarak and Teller Roads to see AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER and BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER.

We repeated the Council Road trip the next day, but continued well beyond the Safety Sound Bridge and the turn inland. For the past couple of years, the bridge has been the nesting place for a PEREGRINE FALCON, and we were pleased to see him perched on the bridge railing. Scattered in the wetter land along the shore, we saw EMPORER and CACKLING GEESE, BRANT and TUNDRA SWAN. Inland we saw several groups of HARLEQUIN DUCKS swimming in a river.

The turn inland is marked by a small park where some old railroad locomotives are rusting away. The engines were originally used in the late 1800's on the elevated rail lines in New York City and Chicago before electrification, and they were brought to Nome to service an unsuccessful rail line into the interior gold fields. The engines were abandoned when the gold rush ended. Farther in we also saw abandoned gold dredges that were used to scour the top surface of the ground. The soil was processed in the dredge to extract the gold with the machines abandoned when the gold was all removed.

While some passerines such as TREE and BANK SWALLOWS, AMERICAN ROBIN, EASTERN YELLOW WAGTAIL, LAPLAND LONGSPUR, TREE, SAVANNAH, and FOX SPARROW, and HOARY REDPOLL were fairly common along the coast, the variety increased as we moved inland into areas where brush and trees were found. Here we saw NORTHERN SHRIKE, AMERICAN PIPIT, NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH, YELLOW, ORANGE-CROWNED, and BLACKPOLL WARBLER, and WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW. A herd of MUSK OX was spotted on a distant hillside. Another interesting mammal was a large ARCTIC or ALASKAN HARE.

We left early the next morning to drive north on the Kougarak Rd. The tundra runs right up to the northern edge of town where the hills begin. Here we saw small numbers of MUSK OX (Figure 2) quite close to the road. They are strange looking

## NORTHERN ADVENTURE IVB *(continued)*

animals similar to buffalo, but smaller, without the pronounced hump, and with long flowing hair and the characteristic horns. We also saw RED FOX, CARIBOU, and MOOSE. The ponds and lakes contained NORTHERN PINTAIL, BLACK SCOTER, AMERICAN WIDGEON and GREATER SCAUP. As the road climbed, we began to see WILLOW PTARMIGAN quite close to the roadside. They were just starting to molt into their summer plumage. GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH song filled the air. Along the way, a SHORT-EARED OWL (Figure 3) was seen perched in a tree.

**Figure 2 Musk Ox**

The lakeside state campsite has the only real toilet facilities on the Kougarak Road, but the road to them was blocked by hard-packed snow. We started to walk across the snow to get to the toilets, and big old me broke through with both feet into a stream of melt water. It was no fun walking around barefoot in my Neos, while my shoes and socks dried under the van's heater blast. Aaron regaled us with stories of how he dried his laundry on the dashboard defroster vents while living in his car for two years and traveling around to bird. We got our best look at a distant



BLUETHROAT from this point.

**Figure 3 Short-eared Owl**



We reached Mile 72 and began our climb up the hill across from Coffee Dome. The hike is about 0.5 miles with about a 400 feet elevation change. It isn't difficult in theory, but the tundra is made up of tussocks that can roll under one's foot. We had to be careful placing our feet for fear of twisting an ankle on a rolling tussock. All this was done while carrying spotting scopes and camera gear. Near the top of the ridge, we spotted WHIMBREL and AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER, the higher altitude, drier ground species. A second, high flying SHORT-EARED OWL passed in what Aaron said was a courting flight. Its wings were held in an upward dihedral.

A BRISTLE-THIGHED CURLEW was finally heard calling as it approached from a distance. It stayed frustratingly out of sight as it landed a couple of hundred yards from the group. Aaron was finally able to lure it in close enough by using taped calls for all to get a good view.

We stopped for lunch along a river bank on the way back to Nome. There were many MOOSE tracks in the damp soil around the picnic spot, but Aaron pointed out WOLVERINE tracks (Figure 4) on the wet sand on the river's edge. The WOLVERINE is high on my must be viewed list.

## NORTHERN ADVENTURE IVB *(continued)*

Further on, Aaron spotted a GYRFALCON zooming along. As we watched, it landed besides its nest on a crag on a rocky cliff, and we were able to see the other brooding adult's head sticking up out of the nest as we looked through the scopes. As we continued on, Aaron pointed out that we were in GOLDEN EAGLE territory. Sure enough, one soon appeared over the crest of a rocky ridge, and we were treated to its landing in its nest. This nest, too, was located on a steep rocky hill.



**Figure 4 Wolverine Tracks**

Our last day in Nome was spent drive west for about 50 miles on the Teller Rd. As mentioned previously, the road runs through a higher and drier landscape inland from the ocean. As we climbed up the hills, we began to see many WILLOW (Figure 5) and ROCK PTARMIGAN (Figure 6) along the road. The ROCK PTARMIGAN begin their molt to summer plumage later than the WILLOW does, so it relatively easy to tell the two apart. After a picnic lunch, we drove down a side road toward the ocean. The stony tundra held several AMERICAN GOLDEN-PLOVER and BLACK-BELLIED PLOVER.

At this point, we started back toward Nome with a stop along the way to meet four biologists from the US National Wildlife Service who were studying RED KNOT breeding populations on the tundra. Aaron drove the van up to the top of a high ridge, and while we waited for them to arrive, we saw several SNOW BUNTING. The biologists explained that the Red Knots were a Pacific subspecies that winters in Baja California and breeds on the tundra. The ridge seemed to have a high concentration of breeding pairs seen so far, 5-6 pair in 14 square kilometers.

**Figure 5 Willow Ptarmigan**

A spotting scope was set up, and we were directed to look at a particular rock about 75 feet off the track. Then we were to bring our binocular view in to a certain slanted red rock and look just to its left. There we would see a Red Knot on its nest. All I can say is that this was one well-camouflaged bird! I finally found the bird by staring through the scope. The bird's black eye was the giveaway.

We left that night, we flew to Anchorage. Since I had changed my plans, I had an extra day in town, and I used it to visit Westchester Lagoon, Potter's Marsh and a lovely nature education center north of town near



Eagle River. The Lagoon had few birds on the tidal flats, but I did spot some distant FRANKLIN'S GULLS and HUDSONIAN GODWIT through my scope. The large pond by the parking lot had several RED-THROATED GREBE.

**Figure 6 Rock Ptarmigan**

## NORTHERN ADVENTURE IVB *(continued)*

Potter's Marsh is a famous birding spot north of Anchorage on the highway to the Kenai Peninsula. It has an extensive boardwalk out above the wetlands, but, although there no new birds, I did have a cow MOOSE walk directly under me as I stood on the boardwalk. I didn't find any new trip birds at the nature center, but I had a nice long walk through a delightful spruce wood with singing GRAY-CHEEKED and HERMIT THRUSHES.

Gambell on St. Lawrence Island attracts birders again in the fall for a brief period for the southward migration of sea birds. In particular, more than a million PINK-FOOTED and SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER each a day may pass the sea watch point. The other lure is again the chance of finding a rare wanderer from Eurasia. I'm not sure if I want to try this again, but I do have one more Alaskan goal in mind. This is a trip to Barrow in early October for the Ross' GULL migration. It is the one real chance in North America to easily see this bird. Stay tuned.

## Upcoming Field Trips

### DECEMBER

#### Wednesday, December 5 RESERVATIONS DUE FOR CAMPFIRE AND OWLING AT FIVE RIVERS

Coordinators: Scott Stoner 785-6760 [scottjstoner@aol.com](mailto:scottjstoner@aol.com)

Peggy Rudis 371-5051 [peggyrudis@msn.com](mailto:peggyrudis@msn.com)

#### Saturday, December 8 CAMPFIRE AND OWLING AT FIVE RIVERS (Albany County; late afternoon / evening)

Coordinators: Scott Stoner 785-6760 [scottjstoner@aol.com](mailto:scottjstoner@aol.com)

Peggy Rudis 371-5051 [peggyrudis@msn.com](mailto:peggyrudis@msn.com)

*Joint program with the Audubon Society of the Capital Region*

Great Horned Owls are often heard calling around dusk at this time of year in the deep pine woods at Five Rivers. In this special joint program, we will meet at 4 p.m. at the visitor center at Five Rivers for a brief introduction, then walk about 1 mile out to a woods that has been productive for owls in the past. Along the way or on the way back, stop around our blazing campfire and enjoy a hot dog and a cup of hot chocolate. The owls are not guaranteed, but a good time is nearly a certainty in this popular event on the HMBC schedule.

Reservations are needed in advance so we can plan how much food will be needed.

Contact either Scott Stoner or Peggy Rudis.

#### Saturday, December 22 SCHENECTADY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT Coordinator/Compiler: Bill Lee

#### Monday, December 29 SOUTHERN RENSSELAER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Jim de Waal Malefyt

## Upcoming Field Trips *(continued)*

### JANUARY

#### **Tuesday, January 1 NEW YEAR'S DAY BIRD COUNT AT FIVE RIVERS** (Albany County; morning)

Coordinator: Craig Thompson 475-0291 (daytime)

This year marks the 32nd Annual New Year's Day Bird Count at Five Rivers. The goal of the count is to identify all the bird species present on January 1st. This also marks the start of the annual bird list. HMBC joins the event again this year and encourages members to participate. Groups will go out at 9:00 a.m. from the Interpretive Building (visitor center), but birders are welcome to come earlier to get a head start. Call ahead to Five Rivers in case of inclement weather.

#### **Wednesday, January 2 RESERVATIONS FOR WINTER RARE BIRD TRIP** February/March WINTER RARE BIRD TRIP

Coordinator: Bill Lee 374-3426 [bileej@hotmail.com](mailto:bileej@hotmail.com)

If any especially rare bird is reported in our general area, we plan to take a trip to look for it. This is usually a day trip, but sometimes requires an overnight stay. To get on the notification list for alert and trip details, contact the coordinator. In 2010, participants saw Northern Hawk Owl, Ivory Gull and Tufted Duck.

#### **Saturday, January 5, TROY 2012 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

Coordinator/Compiler: Larry Alden 861-6087 [overlook@nycap.rr.com](mailto:overlook@nycap.rr.com)

#### **Saturday, January 19 ANNUAL STATE WATERFOWL COUNT** (morning/all day)

Coordinator: Gary Goodness 862-9260 [goodness@nycap.rr.com](mailto:goodness@nycap.rr.com)

On the local segment of this statewide event, participants will count waterfowl and other birds on the Hudson River between North Troy and Hudson Falls.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the Hannaford parking lot on the east end of the North Troy-Waterford Bridge (NY Route 4).

### FEBRUARY

#### **Saturday, February 2 NORTHUMBERLAND AGRICULTURAL AREA** (morning)

Coordinator: Bernie Grossman 399-9159 [bgrossman@nycap.rr.com](mailto:bgrossman@nycap.rr.com)

The Northumberland Agricultural Area is a good place to look for winter visitors such as Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting. We will also look for raptors and specialties like Bohemian Waxwing. If there is time and interest, we will visit the Hudson River near Fort Miller and the Fort Edward Grasslands. Most of the birding will be from cars and the roadside, but dress warmly and bring a snack and a spotting scope, if you have one.

Meet at the Mechanicville Price Chopper at the corner of Routes 4 and 67 at 8:00 AM. The snow date will be February 3.

#### **Saturday, February 16 MOHAWK RIVER/COHOES TO CRESCENT** (Albany County; morning)

in case of snow, trip will be held on Sunday, the following day

Coordinator: Bill Lee 374-3426 [bileej@hotmail.com](mailto:bileej@hotmail.com)

This area, including Cohoes Falls and Simmons Island, offers a great opportunity to study gulls and waterfowl that winter along the Mohawk River. We will look for Glaucous, Iceland and Lesser Black-backed Gulls often present in small

## Upcoming Field Trips *(continued)*

numbers in the winter. This trip will be a good introduction to the many fine vantage points along the Mohawk. Wintering Bald Eagles are also possible.

Meet at the NY State Dam Recreation area behind the U-Haul Rental in Cohoes at 8:30 a.m. From I-787 going north, turn right onto Route 470 (Ontario Street) in Cohoes. Then turn left onto Clark Ave. and proceed to the end.

### **Saturday, February 23 BIRDING BY SNOWSHOE AT FIVE RIVERS** (Albany County, morning)

Coordinator: Craig Thompson 475-0291 (daytime)

*Joint trip with the Audubon Society of the Capital District*

Join Craig for a special outing of birding by snowshoe. Meet at the Visitor Center at 9 a.m. for a brief introduction to snowshoeing, then strap on the waffle stompers and go over the meadow and through the woods in search of winter specialties..

The program, geared for the birding/snowshoeing novice, is open to the public free of charge, but space is limited. Please call Five Rivers at 518-475-0291 by Wednesday, February 20 to register. Snowshoes provided. If there is insufficient snow, we will go on foot. In the event of severe weather, this program may be cancelled.

### ***Feathers***

**Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club**

**c/o Five Rivers EEC**

**Game Farm Road**

**Delmar, NY 12054**