

Feathers

Site Report: Buckingham Pond

by Tristan Lowery

Habitats: Urban park featuring a large pond and deciduous woodlands

Specialties: Spring and fall migrants

Best seasons: Spring

Directions:

From Interstate 90, take Exit 4 for NY-85 toward Slingerlands/Voorheesville, continuing west on NY-85 to the exit for U.S. 20/Western Avenue. Turn left onto Daytona Avenue, then left onto Berkshire Boulevard. Follow Berkshire Boulevard for one-half mile to Buckingham Pond. The parking lot is on the left at the intersection with Colonial Avenue.

From U.S. 20/Western Avenue. Heading east on U.S. 20/Western Avenue, turn right on Hillcrest Avenue to Berkshire Boulevard. Follow Berkshire Boulevard for one-half mile to Buckingham Pond. The parking lot is on the left at the intersection with Colonial Avenue. OR heading west on U.S. 20/Western Avenue, turn left onto Colonial Avenue. Follow Colonial Avenue to the intersection with Berkshire Boulevard, where the Buckingham Pond parking lot is directly across the street.

Buckingham Pond is also conveniently located near several Capital District Transportation Authority bus lines, including the 734, 6, 13, 138, 10, 11, 214, and 763 routes.

Site Description

At first blush, Albany's Buckingham Pond – the centerpiece of what is officially known as Buckingham Lake Park – looks like an unremarkable urban duck pond, with a busy playground and picnic area besides. And, as expected, there is almost always a flock of Mallards of questionably wild credentials plying its calm waters or huddled on the closely-mown shoreline. These tame ducks – along with a few nonmigratory Canada Geese and the occasional Great Blue Heron – are often the only wildlife most park visitors notice here. It's all enough to deter any prospective birder. But this small, unassuming city park provides some much-needed habitat variety in an otherwise residential neighborhood – and in spring and fall, Buckingham Pond can be a surprisingly effective migrant trap, making it a productive and convenient stop for area birders. (Continued Page 105)

Inside This Issue...

Site Report: Buckingham Pond.....	121
President's Corner.....	122
HMBC Birding Guide.....	123
Field Trip Reports.....	127
BYOC.....	128
Upcoming HMBC Programs	129
Upcoming ASCR Programs.....	131
Ecuador Field Trip.....	132
Writers' Page.....	136
Artists' Page.....	137
On Nature.....	138
Upcoming Field Trips.....	139

HMBC BOARD
Officers

President:

Patricia Fuller
1301 Sumner Ave
Schenectady, NY 12309
(518) 421-2318 plfuller310@gmail.com

Vice-President::

Tristan Lowery tristanlowery@gmail.com

Secretary:

Debra Ferguson
3 Castle Point Rd
Athens, NY 12015
518-221-3857 zray.zreee@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Ellen Pemrick
117 Western Ave
West Charlton, NY 12010
518-882-9163 lnmp@nycap.rr.com

Directors

Gregg Recer
518-899-2678 gregg_recer@alum.rpi.edu

Bruce Dudek
518-452-4938 bdudek2@nycap.rr.com

Eric Molho
518-439-6592 mohorising@aol.com

Amanda Dillon - amadillon@gmail.com

Tristan Lowery tristanlowery@gmail.com

Cassandra Davis daviscass33@gmail.com

Committee Chairs

Audit: vacant

Conservation: Kathy Schneider
fallline@nycap.rr.com

Field Trips: Tom Williams
trwdsd@yahoo.com

Membership: Gregg Recer
899-2678 gregg_recer@alum.rpi.edu

Outreach: Vacant

Programs: Scott Stoner
785-6760 programs@hmhc.net

Publications: Denise Hackert-Stoner
denisehstoner@aol.com

Records: Will Raup
944-8711 hoaryredpoll@hotmail.com

Reist Sanctuary: Philip Johnson
soomee4@earthlink.net

Social: vacant

Technology: John Kent
424-2234 jwkent@fastmail.fm

Youth: Vacant

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Guest Columnist, HMBC Board Member Eric Mulho

It's very predictable. When someone hears that I have returned from time spent in a far flung "jungle", their first question is why I would go to such a dark, dangerous place. When I offer that I was bird watching there is usually an uncomfortable silence. If the conversation survives this hurdle, their next question is usually, "how did you become a bird watcher?". As it turns out, my introduction to birding came in Martha's Vineyard, in the form of an active Prairie Warbler nest just off the deck of a rented summer cabin. It was a happy coincidence that an old Peterson's guide and a pair of cheap binoculars came with the cabin. Small yellow bird with black facial markings – check. Thin bill – check. But it was the song that got me. The realization that each species had its own language was a revelation "a thin ze,ze,ze,ze. up the scale" as Peterson so aptly put it. It was a spark for sure but not a passion yet.

What made the difference between a passing interest and a life-long passion? As far as I'm concerned, the answer is simple. That the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club existed and that great birding mentors were ever present on local field trips made all the difference. This was the 1980s and as far as I'm concerned, I learned how to bird and how "cool" birding was from the giants. People like Walt Sabin, Bob Budliger, Bill Lee, Dick Guthrie (and many others..) truly were bigger than life to a newbie like me. Despite the obvious disparity in skill and experience they always made me feel welcome and happily shared their knowledge with patience and enthusiasm. They shared their preferences and tips on how to use optics, simple and complex field ID and importantly, when to let a bird go because the ID just wasn't certain. They loved birds and birding and wanted me to, as well. I was included in my first exhausting Spring Big Day in 1984 by Walt and later that year, my first frozen Christmas counts by Bill Gorman and Monte Gruett. Walt Sabin, in particular, made a lasting impression on me. He was present on nearly every one of the numerous local field trips I joined that first year of my birding adventure in 1984. He was soft spoken and did everything in an unhurried and gently manner. His intuition for bird ID seemed sage-like and I suspect his full white beard didn't diminish his aura of quiet wisdom any. In some ways, I remember Walt as secretly filling the role of the grandfather I never had. If I remember correctly, on one of those early Spring Counts, Walt had arranged a pit stop near Black Creek Marsh at a friend's house. It was on that day that I discovered the pleasure and perils of dandelion wine.

Many years later, I feel that is time to give back. That is why, when I received a phone call out of the blue from Scott Stoner, I agreed to be on the board of directors for the HMBC. The HMBC and its members have given me a gift that has immeasurably enhanced my life. It's an honor to help steward and strengthen the club and support its core missions. I hope to mentor young birders in the field someday (might have to wait till I retire) the way my birding mentors did for me. Our current field trip leaders are doing a fantastic job and I know they would love to have you join them on the trail. I also hope you will consider taking a more active role in the club and the lives of young birders. There are many opportunities within the club for volunteers to help. If you receive a call out of the blue someday, I hope you will say yes too.

Eric Molho

You, too, can contribute to Feathers!

- Do you have a birding story or photos that might be of interest to other birders?
- Have you led a field trip for HMBC?
- Have you written short prose or poetry on the subject of birds? We're starting a Writers' Page!
- Did you take a birding vacation?
- Do you have a favorite birding spot?

SHARE them with HMBC members by submitting them to:

HMBC Contact Information

BIRDLINE of EASTERN NEW YORK:

E-mail: contact@hmbc.net

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

Please send all **electronic submissions for Feathers** via e-mail to:
Denise Hackert-Stoner at DeniseHStoner@aol.com.

Send all paper submissions to:

Denise Hackert-Stoner

6 Knob Hill Road.

Loudonville,

NY

12211

New printing of *Birding New York's Hudson Mohawk Region* is now available

Birding New York's Hudson Mohawk Region, a new printing of HMBC's classic book, is now available. A copy is \$20 for HMBC members and \$25 for non-members. An additional charge of \$5 for postage and handling will be added to the price per book. Contact Gregg Recer gregg_recer@alum.rpi.edu or (518) 899-2678 if you are interested in purchasing a copy. Checks should be made out to ***Hudson Mohawk Bird Club*** and should be sent to:

Gregg Recer

23 Scotch Mist Way

Malta, NY 12020

BUCKINGHAM POND *(continued.....)*

The park is called Buckingham Pond both by eBird and its own local conservancy group, though the city recreation department lists it as Buckingham Lake, and it was previously known as Raft's Pond before suburban development of the area began in the 1920s and hopeful realtors bestowed a name with more royal connotations. Whether it's classified as a lake or a pond is a matter of limnological debate, but whatever it's called, the small but long, thin body of water extends about a third of a mile, lying roughly on a northwest to southeast axis in uptown Albany. The park surrounds the five-acre lake, consisting of a relatively narrow band of greenspace and recreational areas along the northern shoreline, with more extensive wooded areas on south side of the lake, and in a small "panhandle" section in the northwest corner. A maintained gravel path encircles the main section of the pond, crossing a low earthen bridge with a culvert that connects to a stilling basin at its western end. Most park visitors follow the main path, though several informal trails are found in the more densely wooded parts of the park, and this is where the best birding happens during migration.

Buckingham Pond is nestled in one of Albany's most comfortable and walkable residential neighborhoods, conveniently located by several major roads and public transportation. Buckingham Pond is generally less busy than the better-known parks of downtown Albany, but the space is still tailored to residential recreation rather than wildlife viewing. It's a popular spot with dogwalkers, joggers, and fishers, and a new playground attracts families with children as well. Because of this, Buckingham Pond is best birded in the early morning to avoid the noise and crowds. But birds will often linger here throughout the day during spring and fall migration, hiding out in the denser wooded areas on the south shore of the park and in the panhandle, especially in the early evening when the rest of the park crowds with people.

Birding Highlights

Spring – Breeding Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles return to Buckingham Pond by the middle of March in most years, if not earlier. In the ensuing few weeks following their return, one can wander the damp trails under still bare trees in late March through mid-April looking for the earliest signs of spring migration, as Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, Eastern Phoebes, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, Brown Creepers, and Winter Wrens make their way north. Listen also for the high, gurgling whistle of the Rusty Blackbird, which moves through our area in April and is easily overlooked as it flocks with its blackbird cousins.

As spring progresses from April to May, Green Herons and small numbers of shorebirds (both Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers) can be found, if one is careful not to flush them from their hiding places around the edge of Buckingham Pond. Songbird migration really picks up in the first week of May, announced boisterously with the rowdy arrival of Great-crested Flycatchers and Eastern Kingbirds, as well as more elusively with fleeting glimpses of furtive thrushes in the shaded undergrowth. Brown Thrashers, White-throated Sparrows, and Eastern Towhees scratch noisily beneath the bushes as they pass through the park, while colorful Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks can be found singing from high in the treetops. Of course, warblers are a real highlight of spring migration in the Hudson-Mohawk area and 23 species have been recorded in only a few years at Buckingham Pond, making it a rewarding stop for area birders in May.

In April 2016, an injured Red-necked Grebe made a completely unexpected appearance on the pond, where it lingered for eleven days to the delight of local birders, who are generally resigned to distant scope views of this species at our large reservoirs. However, aside from this serendipitous appearance and the occasional American Black Duck or Wood Duck found among the Mallards, Buckingham Pond is generally an underwhelming site for waterfowl, whether in spring or fall.

BUCKINGHAM POND *(continued.....)*

Summer – Buckingham Lake hosts a number of breeding bird species in the summer, including some of our more charismatic songbirds. The park’s small size and convenient location make it ideal spot to for birders to catch a close-up views of nesting birds in our area, including the locally-common woodpecker species, Great-crested Flycatchers, Eastern Kingbirds, Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos, Gray Catbirds, and Baltimore Orioles. Great Blue Herons also frequent the lake in their post-breeding dispersal, providing both birding and non-birding park visitors with excellent views of this large and charismatic pond dweller.

Fall – By the end of August, southbound migrants begin streaming, though Buckingham

For some reason, Canada Warbler can be found here with some reliability in the very last weeks of summer, with some individuals lingering for a few days at the end of August or the beginning of September. A variety of other flycatcher, vireo, thrush, and warbler species are also found here during fall migration, though the park isn’t as impressive during fall migration as it is in spring. And while Buckingham Pond doesn’t have large swaths of grassy, brushy sparrow habitat, occasionally a White-crowned, Fox, Field, or Swamp Sparrow will turn up, either skulking in the wet underbrush or perhaps feeding off the path in swaths of mowed grass among groups of House Sparrows.

Winter – Buckingham Lake is quiet in winter. The lake freezes over most winters for ice-skating and the small park itself is the wrong habitat for the kind of birding with which many Hudson-Mohawk birders occupy the coldest months of the year (namely, looking for wintering gulls and field birds). Many of the year-round bird species begin frequenting well-stocked feeders in the surrounding neighborhood, though it’s worth checking in on the park for Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadees, Dark-eyed Juncos, and other common winter songbirds. In irruption years, “winter finches” like Purple Finch and Pine Siskin have appeared at the pond, though they may pass through as late as April or May. The park’s bare winter trees also make it easier to find Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s Hawks that hunt around the lake.

Suggested Birding Route (spring):

Owing to its relatively small size and straightforward layout, circumnavigation is the most obvious birding route for Buckingham Pond, though it doesn’t really matter which way one chooses to go. Double-backing is often necessary and even advisable on the woodland trails, where one may find birds on a second pass where they hadn’t been earlier. Buckingham Pond can be covered by birders in a relatively short time if necessary, though at the peak of spring migration, it’s surprisingly easy to spend upwards of two hours searching every corner of this rather small urban park.

Beginning at the small parking lot off Berkshire Boulevard, find the gravel path and head east past the picnic area. The long northern shoreline of the lake is sparsely dotted with trees and bushes, usually busy with American Robins, Common Grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds, and House Sparrows, though migrating sparrows and warblers can occasionally be found here. Round the trail at the pond’s narrow eastern end, and head back west along the southern shore. The trailside vegetation will increase on both sides, and at dawn, migrating vireos, kinglets, and warblers can often be found here at eyelevel as they begin their morning foraging. Whichever side of the pond you’re on, keep an eye on the opposite shore for Eastern Kingbirds, Baltimore Orioles, and raptors perched high in the trees, and be sure to check the narrow shoreline here for shorebirds crouching in the grass, and for wading herons in the pond.

BUCKINGHAM POND *(continued.....)*

Where Berkshire Boulevard meets Lenox Avenue, the trail enters a more heavily wooded area shaded by a canopy of trees on either side. After turning left slightly, the trail exits onto the corner of Holmes Dale and Raft Street, where the official trail follows Raft Street along the edge of the main wooded area in the south of the park. However, slightly before this juncture, a small path to the right leads off the main trail and takes birders into a small forested area. This part of the park is little used by joggers and dogwalkers, and the many tall trees and dense understory here provide plenty of habitat for birds. A few informal paths – often muddy in the early spring – wind their way northwest through a little maze of wet thickets, fallen trees, and patches of brush. Birding through this small and tangled wood should be done slowly and carefully, as it's easy to spook whatever birds may be creeping along the ground or perched in the brush, watching you advance and ready to flee. All sorts of birds may be found under the canopy here during spring migration, from chattering Gray Catbirds, Common Yellowthroats scolding from the brush, a Swainson's Thrush perched quietly on a shaded log, or a Least Flycatcher hawking insects from a lower branches between bursts of its hiccupped song. As always, be sure to look and listen for small flocks of migrating warblers feeding in the highest branches overhead – and be prepared to let some go unidentified if they're moving quickly or remain uncooperatively hidden amongst the leaves.

Despite its dense vegetation, this wooded grove is far too small to lose one's bearings, and by following whatever informal paths are worn in any given year, one will eventually rejoin the main trail at a more open area near the intersection of Raft Street and Milner Avenue. Here, the main trail leads back east towards a rope-lined earthen bridge that crosses the culvert between the main pond and the stilling basin. Before the bridge, a break in the trees on the north side of the trail leads into the wooded panhandle of the park. The shaded, leaf-littered clearing here offers good habitat for thrushes, flycatchers, and other songbirds, but sharp eyes are required in this dimly-lit glade. At the far end of this clearing, the path comes right up on the edge of the Buckingham Pond stilling basin, which is lined with towering trees and an abundance of brushy foliage. On heavy migration days, warblers frequently favor this quiet spot and lucky birders can be treated to eyelevel views of these feathered jewels as they descend from the treetops to feed at the water's edge.

The remainder of the panhandle rises gently as one travels west up a small wooded hilltop that overlooks suburban backyards at the park's westernmost end. Here attentive birders may have surprise encounters with thrushes, Brown Thrashers, Eastern Towhees, and Ovenbirds scurrying on the ground, vireos and flycatchers flitting through the branches catching their prey, and Pileated Woodpeckers and Red-breasted Nuthatches clinging to tree trunks overhead. A gentle descent from this modest hilltop leads down to Davis Avenue, which runs back east along the northern edge of the park to meet Berkshire Boulevard. Even though it's a residential suburban roadway, the wooded south side of Davis Avenue is worth checking for birds creeping along this edge habitat, as is the western side of Berkshire Boulevard as one heads back towards the lot.

Before returning to the parking lot, explore the wet, wooded areas around the stilling basin bridge and just north of the parking area. This is often another good spot to be on the lookout for warblers. Hairy Woodpeckers and Northern Flickers nest in nearby dead trees, and the damp, muddy edges of the stilling basin and this end of the main pond occasionally attracts shorebirds, Swamp Sparrows, and Northern Waterthrushes.

Field Trip Reports

Five Rivers – October 14, 2018

I arrived at Five Rivers around sunrise this morning, before the field trip group met up. Right away I found a lot of activity. In the crab orchard, I found a late **Tennessee Warbler** among a bunch of Cedar Waxwings and robins. Along the first 100 feet of the Wild Turkey Trail, I found White-crowned and Lincoln's Sparrows and a Black-throated Green Warbler, as well as hordes of Song Sparrows and some White-throated and Field Sparrows.

A group of nine birders set out on the trails at 8:00. While still near the Visitor Center entrance, we heard a **Rusty Blackbird** flying by. We re-found White-crowned and Lincoln's Sparrow, as well as two Black-throated Green Warblers, in the same area where I had seen them. There were also Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Dark-eyed Junco in that area.

As we walked around the grounds we encountered several groups of migrants. White-crowned Sparrows were unusually common -- I counted at least eight, all of which were juvenile. Others saw at least one adult. Other sparrows included Field Sparrows, Chipping Sparrows, and Eastern Towhees. We had a late **Green Heron** and a single flyover Great Blue Heron. All six common woodpecker species were seen. Gray Catbird and Northern Mockingbird were heard. We had several of each kinglet species. Some saw Palm Warbler from the platform along the west leg of the service road. Finally, a couple of participants saw an **American Pipit** on the green roof of the Visitor Center as the trip was wrapping up. The group total was 47 species.

Thanks to all who came out. It was a chilly start but a very pleasant and productive trip.

John Kent
Selkirk

Vischer Ferry - November 11, 2018

A small group met this morning on Veterans Day for the HMBC Vischer Ferry Field Trip. From the main entrance we proceeded west along the towpath. There was a hotspot of songbird activity near the beginning with Eastern Bluebirds, House Finches, White-throated Sparrows, one RUSTY BLACKBIRD, a Carolina Wren, and at least one Ruby-crowned Kinglet. We also spotted a Red-tailed Hawk and a Sharp-shinned Hawk. After checking for waterfowl for the last several weeks, the leader was surprised to find a PIED-BILLED GREBE in the pond. Mallards are often seen in the canal near the towpath but this morning (and for the last week or so) at least 4 Green-winged Teal and one NORTHERN PINTAIL were hanging out there as well, showing little fear of traffic on the towpath and allowing for some great photo opportunities.

Further down the towpath we also found 5 American Wigeon and 6 NORTHERN SHOVELER. Other highlights for the trip included 5 woodpecker species: Hairy, Downy, Red-bellied, Pileated, and Northern Flicker. We also had a pleasant walk from the water authority entrance to the River but found surprisingly little bird activity there.

I've included a link to a photo of a Green-winged Teal in the canal that I took on Thursday. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/85391626@N07/45809774691/in/dateposted-public/>

John Hershey, trip leader

BYOC!

In an effort to cut down on our waste production the HMBC program committee has decided to begin a “bring your own cup” policy at our program meetings.

Beginning with our January 2019 program we will ask that each attendee bring a cup from home. We will provide paper cup for those who forget to bring a cup for a time, but hope to move to using reusable cups only within a short time.

Thank you for helping us as we move toward a more sustainable way of enjoying refreshments at our meetings.

Upcoming HMBC Programs

Leader or Speaker: Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

Location of Event: Five Rivers EEC

Date: December 3, 2018 - 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Topic: "Year of the Bird"

Commemorating the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, conservation organizations have designated 2018 as the Year of the Bird, a celebration of birds and the ways this Act has helped their conservation, and a recognition of new threats to bird populations in modern times.

We at Naturelogues have prepared this special program to celebrate the Year of the Bird with our personal look at birds both across our nation and across time. While showcasing avian beauty, behavior, and diversity, we weave in successes, failures, and changes over the past hundred years. From plume hunters and pesticides to the recovery of the Bald Eagle, we look at species and habitats lost and protected; birds whose range has changed in our lifetimes, and special conservation issues we have come across in our extensive travels across the US. Please join us as we ponder and celebrate the Year of the Bird!

Denise and Scott have presented many slide programs about the beauty and breadth of the natural history they have experienced while birding and photographing both here in the Capital Region and across North America. You can see some of their work at www.naturelogues.com or at www.facebook.com/naturelogues.



Upcoming HMBC Programs *(continued.....)*

Leader or Speaker: Deborah Allen

Location of Event: Fiver Rivers

Date: January 7, 2019 - 7:00pm - 8:00pm

Topic: Central Park Birds

Explore the bird life of Central Park with researcher and wildlife photographer, Deborah Allen. Central Park, situated on the Atlantic flyway, is internationally acknowledged as one of the best places to observe migratory birds in spring and fall. In April and May, as songbirds travel north to nest, many will stop to rest and feed in the Ramble and North Woods of Central Park. Of these, the small and colorful wood warblers, in brilliant breeding plumage, are the most sought after. Historically, thirty-nine species of Wood Warblers and 296 species of birds have been recorded in Central Park. We'll take a look at the history of birding in Central Park, including migrants, breeding and wintering birds, and many of the rare birds like Hammond's Flycatcher and Boreal Owl that have visited the park.

Deborah's photos of Central Park birds have appeared in numerous publications, including Natural History, National Wildlife, BirdWatching, Bird Watcher's Digest, Birds and Blooms, and the New York Times. She is currently at work on a field guide to the birds of Central Park. For more information about her photography visit www.agpix.com/deballen.

UPCOMING ASCR PROGRAMS

No ASCR programs to announce at this time

Ecuador Field Trip Announcement #3

Kevin and Karen McGrath



On Wednesday October 17, Mr. Ian Campbell of *Tropical Birding Tours* (<http://www.tropicalbirding.com/>) provided a special program for HMBC members and guests to present the proposed itinerary for the January 9th to 18th 2020 field trip to Ecuador. This 10-day trip (2 days travel, 8 days of birding) is open to all members and friends, with a limit of 16, on a first come basis. To date, seven members have confirmed, and three others have expressed interest. We hope to fill the available slots by January 2019.

The Itinerary:

Day 1: 9-Jan-20; Arrival Quito Airport Hotel (TBD)

Day 2: 10-Jan-20; Yanacocha Reserve; Tandayapa Bird Lodge

<http://www.exoticbirding.com/ecuador/yanacocha/description.html>

Day 3: 11-Jan-20; Tandayapa Valley (east side); Tandayapa Bird Lodge

<http://thespeckledhatchback.blogspot.com/2018/02/post-129-ecuadors-tandayapa-valley.html>

Day 4: 12-Jan-20; Reserva Mashpi-Amagusa; Tandayapa Bird Lodge

<http://mashpi-amagusa-reserve.com/index.html>

Day 5: 13-Jan-20; Tandayapa Valley (west side); Tandayapa Bird Lodge

Day 6: 14-Jan-20; Silanche & Milpe; Tandayapa Bird Lodge

<http://www.exoticbirding.com/ecuador/silanche/description.html>

Day 7: 15-Jan-20; Refugio Paz to Antisana; Hosteria Guaytara

www.exoticbirding.com/ecuador/refugio-paz/description.html

Day 8: 16-Jan-20; Antisana and Papallacta; Termas Papallacta

www.antisana.org/antisana-volcano-reserve

Day 9: 17-Jan-20; Papallacta and Guango; Quito (Hosteria Rincon de Puembo)

<https://www.notyouraverageamerican.com/birding-in-papallacta>

Day 10: 18-Jan-20; Departure

Please visit the websites for tons of information, maps, photos, etc. about birding at each of the locations listed. Also, each of the listed accommodation locations has a website you can visit for photo tours, write-ups, and reviews.

Ecuador..... (continued)

Websites for accommodations:

<http://www.tropicalbirding.com/central-south-america-birding/ecuador/tandayapa-bird-lodge/>

<http://www.hosteriaguaytara.com/en/>

<https://www.termaspapallacta.com/?lang=en>

<http://www.rincondepuembo.com/en/>



White-tailed Jay at Jorupe

Travel:

The trip is still too far off to search flights to Quito. We expect to be able to lock down our travel arrangements on or about April 1, 2019.



I have reviewed several websites and have found that the only non-stop flight available is from JFK to Quito with a flight time of 7 hours (10.5 hours with shuttle) and this is also the least expensive flight available. NO direct flights from Albany to Quito are available and all flights from Albany require 1 or two layovers ranging from 5 to 23 hours (yeah..really). Stewart (Newburgh) may be an option with flight times ranging from 14 to 23 hours.

It will simplify coordination on both ends of the trip to have everyone accommodated on the same flights if possible. For now, you can assume that we will secure a group shuttle from Albany to JFK and back.

COST

The final cost will depend on the flight we select and the number who attend. We expect the final cost to range from \$2,900 to \$3,600 per person. The people of Ecuador will of course be delighted to have you spend much more if you choose to bring home an extra bag of souvenirs or indulge yourself at the Spa Resort in Papallacta.

TRAVEL: Tame Airline: Ecuadoran National Air

Item	JFK	Stewart	Albany	Iguanas
Airline	\$550	\$900	\$1,200	Fly
Shuttle	\$130	\$100	\$0	For
Total	\$680	\$1,000	\$1,200	FREE



TOUR: The cost is based on the number of people in the group and based on double occupancy. It includes lodging, meals, professional field guides, and in-country transportation. Alcohol, snacks, and tips (for staff and guides) are not included.

Ecuador..... (continued)



Hoatzins near Napo River

Guests	\$/person
7	\$2,821
8	\$2,647
9	\$2,512
10	\$2,403
11	\$2,315
12	\$2,241
13	\$2,189
14	\$2,134
15	\$2,087
16	\$2,046

EXTRAS

Tip for Guide: Not a fixed cost but I respectfully recommend we plan for an extra \$50 per person to present as a tip to our field guides.

Travel (trip) insurance is recommended. A group plan will cost about \$150 per person (it is about 4%) based on final cost (airline and tour costs).

Health Insurance: Proof of a health insurance policy that is valid in Ecuador is required for all foreign visitors. Typically, this is included in the Travel Insurance plan, but can be purchased separately. It is much easier and less expensive for the group if we are all covered under one plan. If you read up on Ecuador's health care system, they prefer that you GO somewhere else if you get really sick....

Socio-Demographics & Technology

Ecuador is primarily a Spanish speaking country. Many (including our guides) speak English. A passing literacy and/or fluency in Spanish is helpful but not essential. When in doubt, "**Perdón, pero no hablo español**" is a useful phrase. I know other phrases but most of them will get you slapped (well, maybe not YOU).

The national currency of Ecuador is the US dollar, no exchange needed. If the cost of anything is higher than back home, they are playing the local version of "gouge the gringo". They are so American!

The electric grid is based on US standards. No special adapters needed for electrical equipment. The electricity is typically very stable

Cellphone and WiFi services are good in the Urban areas and in the larger towns. They can be erratic at times when we get outside populated areas, which is most of the time in Tadayapa Valley, except at the lodge.

Ecuador..... (continued)

Health

The CDC recommends that visitors to Ecuador be up to date on your standard immunizations, hepatitis A, and typhoid. Malaria and Yellow Fever are also common at lower elevations but not typical in the cloud forest or higher regions where we will be travelling. You may choose to check with your personal physician.

The NYS DOH has a nice webpage list of do and don't with respect to food and beverage consumption. There are lots of typical bacteria that are normal to people there that are alien to YOU. If you have a cooperative doctor, ask if they can give you a prophylactic anti-biotic for the trip..or just avoid street vendors..those roadside tortillas are awesome going down but much less so coming out.

Weather and Clothing

You can expect the temperature to fluctuate from 70°F during the daytime to 40°F at night. It will be damp at this time of year with occasional light rain falling on two to four days, typically shortly after sunrise and in the evening after dusk. Heavy rain and/or protracted rain lasting all day is unusual. Dress in layers to accommodate daily temperature changes and water resistant or waterproof outerwear. Waterproof footwear for walking (trails get damp and stay damp) is highly recommended. Good hiking footwear is not essential but never hurts.

Communications

I am collecting the e-mail addresses of everyone who is interested in the trip. Starting in December, I will create a sharefile space on my office computer network and post information as it becomes available. I will send you a download link to the site and updates as they are available. For security reasons I am not allowed to publish the sharefile link (my IT director would murder me). If you are interested in trip (even if not committed yet, please send me your e-mail and I will add you to the group list and send you the sharefile link. Send e-mail to:

kmcgrath@nycap.rr.com or kmcgrath@chazencompanies.com

Thanks all...Happy Birding!!!

WRITERS' PAGE

Winter Garden

Denise Hackert-Stoner

We are perfect on this New Year's morning, my garden and I.

Weeds pulled, we are vindicated.

Amended with grace and compost, we are redeemed.

We contain every possibility for straight rows, deep roots, and good harvests.

And under a vast, new sky we stand,

Emptied of everything but snow and resolution.

ARTISTS' PAGE

House Finch
Dagmar Frinta

February 19-

a house finch.



ON NATURE

Year of the Bird

By Scott Stoner

A hundred or so years ago, birds were at a precipice. A lot of things were happening and none of them good. Hats adorned with plumes of wading birds (and even whole songbirds!) were all the rage. The passenger pigeon, once numbered in the billions, was nearly gone, and beyond the point of no return. Plume hunters were ravaging whole colonies of egrets in Florida Bay, shooting all of the adults, taking their plumes, and leaving the helpless young to starve and die. The first warden, Guy Bradley, hired to confront the plume hunters, was shot dead, his murder never solved. And instead of Christmas Counts, people got together at Christmas to do the “side hunt” – to kill as many birds as they could.

Things were dire indeed. But against this backdrop, people began to take action. The demand for feathered hats plummeted, the Audubon Society grew, protections were enacted, the first national wildlife refuge was set aside, and the path to the Migratory Bird Treaty Act was laid, toward its passage in 1918.

Now, virtually all birds are protected. There are more than 500 wildlife refuges, and people walk along the Guy Bradley Trail at the edge of Florida Bay, and learn about the history of this brave environmental pioneer who gave everything for the cause. And Christmas Bird Counts replaced the side hunt, with birds being counted in the wild instead of being killed.

Several organizations have called 2018 The Year of the Bird, to celebrate birds, the history of the MBTA, and in recognition of new threats to birds in modern times. As we trudge through field and forest counting birds this Christmas, or just enjoy the beauty of birds in our own backyard, keep in mind how far we’ve come since the early 1900s – and that continued vigilance is required to keep birds, the ecosystem they represent, and our hobby of birding, from succumbing to new threats.



Upcoming Field Trips.

December

Christmas Bird Counts

Saturday, December 15, SCHENECTADY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 5:00am - 6:00pm

Coordinator/Compiler: Larry Alden 518-861-6087 overlook@nycap.rr.com

Saturday, December 22, SOUTHERN RENSSELAER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Naomi Lloyd 518-596-5964 naomi_kestrel@yahoo.com

Saturday, December 29, TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Larry Alden 518-861-6087 overlook@nycap.rr.com

Thursday, December 20th SARATOGA SPRINGS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Jean Holcomb jeanH46@icloud.com Good territory available. Owlers needed

Note: Field trips for 2019 are not available at this time. Please check the website, www.hmbc.net, for future field trips.

Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

c/o Five Rivers EEC

56 Game Farm Road

Delmar, NY 12054