

December 2022

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# Feathers

*Bi-monthly publication of the  
Hudson-Mohawk  
Bird Club, Inc.*

## South Africa 2022 by Jim de Waal Malefyt

June 12, 2022 was our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Sandy wanted to celebrate it with a family party and I wanted to celebrate it with a memorable bird tour. Well, we did both. This article is about the bird tour we took September 29 – October 12, 2022, in the country of South Africa with Naturalist Journeys. We chose South Africa because we had never been to Africa and because my Dutch, great-grandfather, Karel de Waal Malefyt, had been there twice and was captured there with his family by the British in the Boer War 1899-1902.

According to our guides, this time of year, early spring, was great for seeing birds and wildlife as the winter dry season was ending, creating better viewing opportunities as much of the vegetation was leafless. South Africa has over 970 recorded bird species in 402 genera and 104 families. Temperatures were very comfortable in the 60s-80s with one day reaching 106 F in Kruger National Park (NP). We only experienced one rainy morning and bugs were not a problem. Some rain a week before we arrived caused a wide variety of flowers to be blooming wherever we traveled.

Our tour with 10 people and 3 guides started in Cape Town from where we explored coastal bird habitats on the western Atlantic Ocean side and where I saw my first Flamingoes that weren't in a zoo! Similarly, in one of the bays I saw my first non-zoo African Penguin colony. We also spent one day on a pelagic trip out of False Bay to meet up with a fish trawler bringing in its long net of bottom fish. The fish attracted both Atlantic and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, White-chinned Petrels, and many Sooty Shearwaters. We spent two days at De Hoop Maritime Preserve on the Indian Ocean side where Common Ostrich and Cape Spurfowl roamed the grounds of this resort.

We also spent one day at the beautiful Kirsten Bosch Botanical Gardens where flowers were in full bloom. We received some interesting comments about our bird photos at the botanical gardens that we sent to our grandchildren. They were sure the Sugarbirds and Sunbirds were Hummingbirds, but South Africa does not have Hummingbirds. These endemic birds have curved bills used to extract nectar while perched on Sugarbush flowers in the genus Protea.

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## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

No President's Corner This Month

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**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](mailto: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](mailto:DeniseHStoner@aol.com).

Send all paper submissions to:  
**Denise Hackert-Stoner**  
**6 Knob Hill Road.**  
Loudonville,  
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**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 [grecer@alum.rpi.edu](mailto:grecer@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

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## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

**Saturday, December 10- Monday, December 12**

**Location: LONG ISLAND IN WINTER (Out-of-area; overnight stays)**

**Coordinators: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen 518-330-4552 (GR, c) [gregg.recer@gmail.com](mailto:gregg.recer@gmail.com)**

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED WELL IN ADVANCE FOR THIS TRIP. CONTACT THE COORDINATORS BY October 30th FOR RESERVATIONS AND LOGISTICS DETAILS. On this extended trip to NY's Long Island our focus will be on birding sites along the south shore searching for wintering waterfowl and seabirds such as loons, grebes, gulls, and alcids. There should also be good opportunities for wintering landbirds, and we'll keep an eye on reports of vagrants to chase. We plan to leave first thing Saturday morning, returning Monday evening. Our itinerary will be flexible, but we can expect to cover highlight locations during the weekend such as Robert Moses and Jones state beaches, Hither Hills and Montauk Pt.

Reservations by Sunday, October 30. There will be a limit of 8 participants (including the coordinators) for this trip. Contact the coordinators for reservations and logistics details.

**2022 Christmas Bird Counts:**

**History:**

Frank Chapman and 26 other conservationists initiated the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) as a way of promoting conservation by counting, rather than hunting, birds on Christmas Day of 1900. Some counts have been running every year since then and the CBC now happens in over 20 countries in the western hemisphere! Now a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society, with over 120 years of community science involvement, it is an early-winter bird census, where thousands of volunteers across the U.S., Canada (where Audubon partners with Birds Canada), and many countries in the Western Hemisphere go out over a 24-hour period on one calendar day to count birds. You can find more information, and how to participate, [at the Audubon Society website](#).

**Saturday, December 17, SCHENECTADY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

**Coordinator/Compiler: Larry Alden 518-861-6087 [overlook@nycap.rr.com](mailto:overlook@nycap.rr.com)**

**Saturday, December 24, SOUTHERN RENSSELAER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

**Coordinator/Compiler: Naomi Lloyd 518-596-5964 [naomi\\_kestrel@yahoo.com](mailto:naomi_kestrel@yahoo.com)**

**Saturday, December 31, TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT**

**Coordinator/Compiler: Larry Alden 518-861-6087 [overlook@nycap.rr.com](mailto:overlook@nycap.rr.com)**

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS (CONTINUED)

**Sunday, January 1, 2023 8:45AM**

**Location: NEW YEAR'S DAY BIRD COUNT AT FIVE RIVERS EEC (Albany County; morning)**

**Coordinators: Five Rivers EEC 518-475-0291 (daytime) ~and~ Cindy Edwardson [cjredwardson@gmail.com](mailto:cjredwardson@gmail.com) 218-348-1859**

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, located on Game Farm Rd., in Delmar, NY, is a large area of fields and forest and is one of the premier birding locations in the Capital District.

This year marks the 40th 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 Five Rivers' annual bird list. HMBC joins the event again this year and encourages members to participate. Groups will go out at 9:00 a.m., but birders are welcome to come earlier to get a head start. Everyone will meet up at the Visitors Center for a compilation of species observed at 11:00 a.m.

Call ahead to Five Rivers in case of inclement weather.

Meet at 8:45 a.m. at Five Rivers EEC in Delmar.

**Saturday, January 14, 2023, 2-6PM**

**NOTE: DATE IS APPROXIMATE - ACTUAL DATE TBA**

**Location: Mid-January: WASHINGTON COUNTY GRASSLANDS WMA (Washington County; afternoon)**

**Coordinator: Naomi Lloyd 518-596-5964 [naomi\\_kestrel@yahoo.com](mailto:naomi_kestrel@yahoo.com)**

With almost 500 acres of protected fields and meadows, the Washington County Grasslands WMA is a winter treasure. We will meet in the early afternoon and search for Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, Rough-legged Hawks and other diurnal species. Snowy Owl is always a possibility in an irruption year. As the afternoon wears on, we can hope to see the changeover from day to night shift, as Short-eared Owls displace Northern Harriers from their hunting grounds.

The exact date of this trip will depend upon weather conditions, snow depth, etc.

Because we will be birding from the road, it will be necessary to share vehicles and to limit the number of participants to 16. A maximum of five vehicles would be best. Contact the coordinator for reservations, and other information.

Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the parking lot on Blackhouse Road.

**Note: The above trip will be repeated in mid-February, 2023 if there is interest. Approximate date is Saturday, February 11. Time will be 2-6PM. Coordinator: Naomi Lloyd 518-596-5964 [naomi\\_kestrel@yahoo.com](mailto:naomi_kestrel@yahoo.com)**

**Sunday, February 26, 2023, 6PM**

**DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS, CAPE ANN & NEWBURYPORT/PLUM ISLAND (out-of-area weekend)**

**See trip description March 17-19**

**Coordinators: Gregg Recer/Cathy Graichen, [gregg.recer@gmail.com](mailto:gregg.recer@gmail.com) 518-330-4552 (GR)**

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS (CONTINUED)

**Saturday, March 11, 2023, 8AM**

**Location: VOSBURGH SWAMP WMA (Greene County; morning) (joint trip with Alan DeVoe Bird Club)**

**Coordinator: Alan Mapes 518-817-1512 [alanmapes@gmail.com](mailto:alanmapes@gmail.com)**

On this morning trip, we will hike to the marsh for waterfowl and migrant land birds. We will also check the Hudson River for waterfowl and Bald Eagles.

Meet at 8:00AM at the Four-mile Point Preserve parking lot on Four Mile Point Road. From Mansion Street in the village of Coxsackie, go south on State Route 385 (Washington Ave.), approximately 2.5 miles to a left turn onto Four Mile Point Road. Proceed to the bottom on the hill – the parking area is straight ahead where the road takes a 90 degree bend to the right.

**Friday, March 17, 2023- Sunday, March 19, 2023**

**Location: CAPE ANN & NEWBURYPORT/PLUM ISLAND MA (out-of-area, multi-day trip)**

**Coordinators: Gregg Recer and Cathy Graichen [gregg.recer@gmail.com](mailto:gregg.recer@gmail.com) 518-330-4552 (GR)**

The Cape Ann and the Newburyport/Plum Island, MA, areas are prime winter birding locations. We expect to divide our time between Cape Ann's shoreline and Newburyport/Plum Island looking for white-winged gulls, wintering sea ducks such as Harlequins, scoters, eiders and other winter visitors like Purple Sandpipers, loons, grebes, alcids, field birds, Snowy Owl, etc. Participants will have Friday to travel at their leisure so that we can begin birding as a group first thing Saturday morning. Limit 8 participants. By Club policy, this overnight trip is for members, with non-members accommodated if room is available and with the leader's approval.

**RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. Contact Gregg Recer by February 26th to reserve a spot and for hotel reservation information.**

**Tuesday, March 28, 2023, 6PM**

**DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS, WOODCOCK WATCHING WITH SUNY COBLESKILL**

**See trip description below.**

**Coordinators: Scott Stoner & Denise Hackert-Stoner [scottjstoner@aol.com](mailto:scottjstoner@aol.com) 518-785-6760**

**APPROXIMATE DATE -- WOODCOCK WATCHING WITH SUNY COBLESKILL**

**This will take place sometime in the first half of April; contact coordinators Scott Stoner & Denise Hackert-Stoner [scottjstoner@aol.com](mailto:scottjstoner@aol.com) 518-785-6760 by March 28 to sign up to be notified of the exact date.**

**Field leader: Dr Roger Masse of SUNY Cobleskill**

Join Dr Roger J Masse and students in the Wildlife Management program at SUNY Cobleskill for an evening of woodcock watching in Cobleskill. During this crepuscular outing, participants can expect to hear peenting male Woodcock and maybe even see courtship flights depending on lighting conditions. In addition, Dr Masse and his students will place mist nets around select singing grounds in hope of catching and banding these peculiar birds. You know what they say... a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush! Although captures can never be guaranteed, this outing may provide your best opportunity to see a Woodcock up close and personal. Woodcock capture is weather-dependent so scheduling will be flexible. Evenings with precipitation and high winds are avoided. Participants will meet at the site about 1.5 hours before sunset and banding normally concludes around 9:00p.m. The potential window for capture dates is 1-16 April 2023.

## UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS (CONTINUED)

### Saturday, April 15, 2023, 8AM

**Location:** BEGINNER BIRDER WORKSHOP - EARLY MIGRANTS AT FIVE RIVERS EEC (Albany County; morning) This trip is geared towards novice birders, but all are welcome.

**Coordinator:** Scott Stoner 518-785-6760 [scottjstoner@aol.com](mailto:scottjstoner@aol.com)

Join us for a morning walk through the varied habitats of Five Rivers as we explore fields, ponds, woodlands, and marshes and look for permanent resident birds and early migrants. Be prepared for wet trails.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot at Five Rivers EEC in Delmar.

### Sunday, April 23, 2023 8AM

**Location:** POWELL SANCTUARY (Columbia County; morning) (joint trip with Alan DeVoe Bird Club)

**Coordinator:** Kathy Schneider 518-248-8665 [fallline@nycap.rr.com](mailto:fallline@nycap.rr.com)

This 145-acre preserve has been owned and managed by the Alan DeVoe Bird Club since 1959. It features a beaver pond with an observation blind, neighboring farm fields, and Dorson's Rock, a sandstone ledge that offers good hawk watching and a panoramic view of the Hudson Valley. There are 3 miles of moderate, well-marked trails throughout the sanctuary, which is mostly woods. The club's list for this site has more than 200 species, including 20 species of warblers.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Wilson M. Powell Wildlife Sanctuary, 75 Hunt Club Road, Old Chatham. From the junction of County Route 13 and Albany Turnpike in the hamlet of Old Chatham, travel southwest on County Route 13 for 0.9 miles to Pitt Hall Road on the left, where two signs mark the road to Powell House and the sanctuary. Follow Pitt Hall Road 0.25 miles, then bear left (east) onto Hunt Club Road and continue 0.25 miles to the main parking lot.

### Sunday, April 30, 2023, 8AM

**Location:** HANNACROIX CREEK PRESERVE (Greene County; morning)

**Coordinator:** Rich Guthrie 518-756-9094 [richardpguthrie@gmail.com](mailto:richardpguthrie@gmail.com)

On this trip we'll be looking for migrant warblers, vireos and of course, (New) Baltimore Orioles. The moderately easy trail goes around attractive nesting and migrant songbird habitats with a scenic creek and waterfall. Louisiana Waterthrush nest here regularly and migrant warblers are drawn to the varied habitats along the trailsides. Let's see if we can add some interesting species to the Breeding Bird Atlas and to the list of over 120 species recorded for this eBird Hotspot. We will start at the main entrance to the Preserve. If time permits, we will also explore the trail leading down to the Hudson River where Bald Eagles and migrant waterfowl are often seen.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the main entrance, just off NYS Rt. 144, just south of the Albany/Greene County line (Coeymans/New Baltimore).

## WRITERS PAGE



(Image from Dalle)

### Red Breasted Nuthatch

Written by: Marilyn Hamecher 11/25/22

This quirky little bird's foot has one big toe that faces backward.  
When he's heading down the trunk, the other three toes face forward.

On his way down, he searches cracks and crevices for insect pests.  
His actions protect the trees from larvae and pesky bugs that will infest.

The Nuthatch feeds on seeds by cracking them open with their beak.  
They jam them into the tree bark then whack them hard, as they seek.

Their favorite foods are nuts, sunflower seeds, mealworms and peanuts.  
Using their upside down foraging habits they seek out the seeds and nuts.

The female will incubate 5 - 6 or 4 - 7 spotted reddish brown eggs.  
The male will bring her food while she sits, she never has to beg.

Both parents work very hard to feed the nestlings, for up to 2 to 3 weeks.  
Their diets consist of insects in the bark, spiders and whatever else they seek.

Catching them foraging for food upside down on branches and on a tree trunk.  
As they maneuver down, facing the ground, you would think they were drunk.

Whenever you see a Nuthatch, they are usually upside down, it seems absurd.  
It's strange but our world seems to be upside down as well, heading downward.

Perhaps we can all learn a valuable lesson from this bird by making a match.  
We have to be upside down, before we can be right side up, like the Nuthatch.

# ON NATURE

## “Approaching Winter”

By Scott Stoner

Winter is approaching. If the shorter days, the lower angle of the sun, and the sudden change from 70s to 20s aren't sufficient signs, the reports of multiple feet of lake effect snow in western New York certainly are. Yes, winter is approaching. But how do the wild creatures approach winter?

The creatures that live in the wild have wintering strategies too, evolved over time. We're familiar with several of these. Most birds and mammals are endotherms, maintaining a constant temperature (most of them, most of the time). Some birds migrate, while others stick it out in the cold, eating voraciously to stay warm. Some mammals such as groundhogs and bears hibernate, but many others stay active, searching for fresh or consuming stored food all winter. In the fall, squirrels bury nuts while beavers cut trees and stash branches in their ponds for winter consumption.

Reptiles and amphibians are ectotherms, whose body temperature is equal to their environment. Instead of hibernation, at least some species undergo a period of winter dormancy called “brumation.” Snapping turtles, for instance, head to the bottom of the pond, where they take in a minimum amount of oxygen and use calcium from their shells to neutralize the acid that builds up in their tissues! Wood frogs actually freeze solid; both respiration and heartbeat cease altogether until they thaw in the spring! Before freezing they draw water out of their cells to avoid damage, and use glucose and urea to lower the intracellular freezing temperature to avoid formation of ice.

But, how do the ectothermic butterflies and moths survive winter? They exhibit at least five different strategies, listed here and discussed further below. Interestingly, there are parallels to both birds and to reptiles and amphibians.

- 1) Migrate south (Monarch)
- 2) Overwinter as adult (Mourning Cloak)
- 3) Overwinter in pupal stage, as chrysalis or within cocoon (Black Swallowtail; Cecropia Moth)
- 4) Overwinter as eggs (Inland Barrens Buck Moth)
- 5) Overwinter as caterpillar (Isabella Tiger Moth)

Two terms we encounter are diapause and antifreeze. With winter diapause, both metabolic and respiratory rates are slow and low. In freezing temperatures, ice crystals in body tissue would be rapidly lethal, but they adapt by reducing the amount of water in their blood and producing antifreeze, such as glycerol or sorbitol. The onset of diapause is triggered by day length (hours of daylight, or daylight length), and to a lesser degree, temperature. Two factors are needed to trigger the end of diapause in the spring: increased day length that follows several months of cold. These are the same factors that trigger spring growth in plants!

## ON NATURE (CONTINUED)

Monarch butterflies (*Danaus plexippus*) undertake a multi-generational migration. Several generations can occur in the temperate climates such as here, with the last generation being a “super generation” of adults, which then fly 3,000 miles to their wintering grounds in the mountains of central Mexico. There, they enter diapause, in which they suspend their breeding cycle and gather in huge concentrations to help stay warm. In the spring, they fly north, but only part way, stopping in areas such as Texas and Oklahoma to breed. A month later, their offspring continue the journey north.



The Mourning Cloak (*Nymphalis antiopa*) butterfly overwinters as an adult, hibernating under tree bark, in woodpiles, barns, tree holes, and in crevices in rocks. Their blood contains “antifreeze” and they can survive down to 80 degrees below zero! However, the production of antifreeze agents is only triggered by cold weather, so placing a summer Mourning Cloak in the freezer would be quickly fatal. They sometimes emerge in the winter on sunny days. In the early spring, before nectar is available, they feed mainly on tree sap!

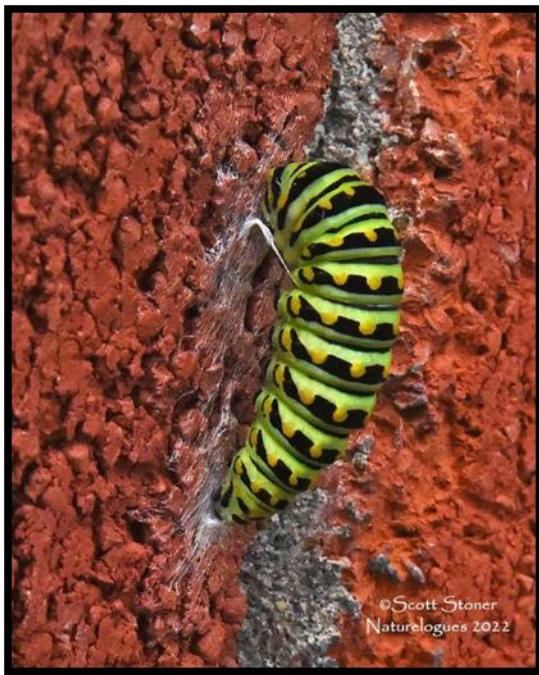


## ON NATURE (CONTINUED)

The Black Swallowtail (*Papilio polyxenes*) overwinters here as a chrysalis. Caterpillars are often seen well into the fall, feeding, before moving to a location to pupate. They produce antifreeze, which prevents its cells from freezing. When it pupates, it enters diapause a period of dormancy in which its metamorphosis into an adult is on hold.



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Cecropia Moths (*Hyalophora cecropia*), and other giant silkworm moths overwinter in cocoons. This largest moth in North America has a wingspan of up to 6 inches. I raised them as a kid on Long Island so I have fond memories of this huge nocturnal species. I used to bring in wild cherry for the caterpillars to eat and watch them grow and spin their cocoons. Now I am thrilled to occasionally find one in the wild up here, either as a caterpillar or a large, gray-brown dried-leaf-like cocoon attached to a thin branch or sometimes a tree trunk. In late summer, the caterpillar spins this tightly woven, protective cocoon made of three layers of different densities of silk, which becomes the Cecropia's home for the next 10 months! The

## ON NATURE (CONTINUED)

cocoon is semi-impermeable and will shed water, protecting its precious occupant from the ice and winds of winter. About 10 days after ‘spinning in,’ the caterpillar within the cocoon sheds its skin one last time and becomes a pupa which will remain dormant until it completes its final step of metamorphosis to a moth in the warmer, humid weather of spring! Watch for them to emerge in May or June.



The Inland Barrens Buck Moth (*Hemileuca maia maia*), found at the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, overwinters as eggs. The adults of this strikingly colored member of the silk moth family can be seen flying in late September and early to mid-October. Eggs are laid on stems of young scrub oaks in tight clusters as shown in the photo below. The eggs overwinter and hatch in May.

# Field Trip Reports

## Saratoga Spa SP - Carlsbad trail

**Sunday, Sept. 18, 2022**

**Coordinator: Naomi Lloyd**

On a pleasant fall morning six birders met at the Carlsbad parking area of Saratoga Spa SP. We started out checking the line of trees across from the lot, getting Black-throated Green and Chestnutsided Warblers and the first of numerous Eastern Bluebirds, while overhead Blue Jays moved in migrating flocks. The Picnic table Graveyard itself was less productive than usual, though we did find Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and House Wren there. Walking the path down to the capped landfill, we had a nice low Northern Harrier flyover, followed by a Redtail and Broadwing. While heading down to the pond, we got a few more warbler species including Common Yellowthroat, Pine, and Bay-breasted. A Vireo gave us frustratingly brief looks but may have been a Philadelphia, given its yellow underparts and faint eye line. Disappointingly the only confirmed Sparrow species was Chipping - the brushy weedy areas are usually much more productive.

After 3 hr 15 minutes, we had a total of 35 species seen or heard, about average for this trip. Thanks to all who attended!

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S118984617>

**September 24, 2022**

**Nutten Hooke (Joint Hudson-Mohawk/Alan Devoe)**

**Coordinator: Kathryn Schneider**

It was cool, crisp, 39 degrees when five birders from Alan Devoe and HMBC met at Nutten Hooke on the morning of September 24<sup>th</sup>. Beginning in the Icehouse Road parking lot and throughout the morning we were treated to a constant stream of Blue Jays overhead, heading north in an impressive daytime migration that totaled close to 400 birds. We started on the river and walked south along the Federal Footpath to Ferry Road. There were plenty of Canada Geese, along with several Belted Kingfishers, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons, both Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, and immature Bald Eagles. Walking back on the inland trail and along Ferry and Icehouse Roads we saw additional Bald Eagles soaring overhead, including some adults, bringing the total to eight for the day. The warblers were sparse and not seen by everyone in the group but some of us got looks at Nashville, Palm, Magnolia, Yellow-rumped, and Common Yellowthroat. We were apparently too early for most of the sparrows, but we did record the resident Song and Swamp Sparrows along with an Eastern Towhee. We ended the morning with about 40 species for the group.

## Mohawk-Hudson Bike-hike Trail, Lions Park

**Saturday, Oct. 29, 2022**

**Coordinator: Naomi Lloyd**

Six birders braved the frosty fog to walk the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-hike Trail along the river backwaters and farm fields. Waterfowl numbers and diversity were low, due to low visibility and the occasional bang of a duck hunter, who we later saw pulling in his decoys. A few Wood Ducks and Green-winged Teal were seen. Great Blue Herons still lurked along the shores and we were entertained by Belted Kingfishers rattling in flight. Amongst Red-

## Field Trip Reports (continued)

winged Blackbirds we were able to pick out five Rusty Blackbirds, a lifer for several participants. Robins and Cedar Waxwings gobbled fruit from trees and vines. Good looks were had for two Cooper's Hawks and the first American Tree Sparrows of the season.

Our total for the morning was 36 species. Thanks to all who joined us!

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/checklist/S121536100>

After the trip had officially ended, I drove down to Lock 7 where I was happy to find a White-winged Scoter posing on the glass-still water.

### **Collins Lake**

**Saturday, Nov. 5, 2022**

**Coordinator: Naomi Lloyd**

Seven birders met at Collins Lake to check out the always

unpredictable waterfowl there. This morning the best sighting was of four American Coots, a high number for our area. Other than that, just the usual Canada Geese came and went, with a few Wood Ducks tucked in on the island. From there we went down to the Scotia-Glenville section of the Bike-hike Trail. The habitat has changed considerably in the past several years, between the large solar field and much brush cutting along the power lines. This resulted in a loss of brushy sparrow habitat, but we still managed to find numerous White-throats and Juncos, and one each of Swamp and Fox Sparrow.

Total count for our two stops was 37 species. Thanks to all who came!

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/86374>

### **Tomhannock Reservoir**

**Saturday, Nov. 19, 2022**

**Coordinator: Naomi Lloyd**

Where was everyone? It was a perfect late fall day, yet we had only three birders on this usually-popular trip. Nevertheless, we surveyed the waters from the causeway, finding many Hooded and Common Mergansers, a flock of Green-winged Teal, and a handful of Common Goldeneye. From the Nortonville Rd pulloff we travelled up into the farm country surrounding the reservoir. Bluebirds were common and we sighted a half-dozen Redtails and a Northern Harrier hunting over a field. Several Northern Mockingbirds darted into tangled shrubs, and both House and Purple Finches were seen. We found on Common Loon by the Ford Rd bridge. After the official trip was ending, two of us decided to try to run down a raft of maybe-not-goose dead center in the lake. We didn't find those, but at the Croll Rd pulloff we got nice looks at a Red-throated Loon.

Surprisingly, we only had a single Bald Eagle all morning!

Total species count for the trip was 28. Thanks to those who showed up!

eBird checklist: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/86174>

## HMBC Annual Dinner 2023

**Monday April 3, 2023**

**Century House, Latham**

**Program: Audubon's Migratory Bird Initiative**

**Speaker: Chad Witko, Senior Coordinator, Avian Biology, National Audubon Society**

The mission of the Migratory Bird Initiative is to secure the future of migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere by reducing direct threats and protecting key places across the Americas in coordination with science, conservation and policy partners.

The Initiative brings together the latest spatial information on species distributions and movements across their annual cycles to identify priority areas for 458 species of migratory birds that regularly occur in the United States and Canada. We will use this information to define where and how to focus Audubon's conservation investments in order to protect, restore and manage key habitat and also mitigate threats along full migratory pathways for these species.

Audubon expects to achieve these goals by 1) consolidating and elevating the best-available migration science, filling research gaps and identifying real-time threats throughout annual cycle; 2) strengthening connections and cooperation among key stakeholders such as government agencies, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions and the Audubon network, and 3) informing policy advocacy at the local, state and federal level to drive science-based conservation.

Migratory birds face threats during all stages of the annual cycle, and these threats are accelerating. Fortunately, scientific data, particularly during migration, are accumulating; however, we need to act swiftly and collectively to protect birds and the places they need before the opportunities to do so disappear. Partnerships will be central to the success of the Migratory Bird Initiative, and Audubon looks forward to building and strengthening relationships with other key research and conservation organizations.

As Senior Coordinator, Chad Witko communicates about the Migratory Bird Initiative and other science programs within Audubon, working with data and knowledge holders across the Western Hemisphere to build relationships and acquire migratory bird datasets. Through this work, he is a principal contributor to the development of the [Bird Migration Explorer](#).

As an expert birder and ornithologist, Chad provides a lifetime of birding knowledge and nearly twenty years of field experience to the National Science Division at Audubon.

Before joining Audubon in 2019, Chad worked on various bird research, conservation, and education projects across the United States. These include developing avian conservation strategies linked to forestry efforts in New Hampshire, serving as an eBird state reviewer, mist-netting and banding migratory passerines in California, and educating visitors to Eastern Egg Rock about seabird restoration efforts for Project Puffin.

Chad holds a BS in Environmental and Forest Biology from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry and an MS in Conservation Biology and a Certificate in Applied Spatial Analysis for GIS from Antioch University New England. He currently resides in Vermont with his partner and daughter.

## Upcoming HMBC Programs

**Date and Time:** Monday, December 5, 2022, 6:30pm

**Location:** Five Rivers EEC, Delmar, NY

**Topic:** The Birds of Vischer Ferry Preserve

**Speaker:** John Hershey

John will talk about some of his experiences birding at the Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve for the last 20 years. He will provide a “tour” of some of the main birding spots and trails in the Preserve. Most importantly, he will share some of his favorite bird photos taken there which illustrate the bird species characteristic of the Preserve and its habitat. These would include ducks, woodpeckers, swallows, warblers, blackbirds, shorebirds, herons, rails, and bitterns. He will be sure to talk about the “mega-rarity” Violet-green Swallow which was discovered there last year, and perhaps a few other lesser rarities as well.

John is a former Secretary and Director for HMBC. He has been leading HMBC field trips to Vischer Ferry Preserve, Peebles Island, and Fox Hill Road for many years. Birding has led him to travel throughout North America and more recently to Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, and India. He has presented a number of HMBC programs on some of his favorite birding trips. He is semi-retired and works part time as a psychologist in private practice.

Feel free to bring a dessert or snack to share. Alcohol not permitted.

**Monday January 9, 2023, 6:30pm**

**Zoom only**

**Topic:** The ebird Review Process

**Speaker:** Zach Schwartz-Weinstein, ebird reviewer

**Date and Time:** Monday, February 6, 2023, 6:30pm

**Location:** Hybrid In-person and Zoom; Five Rivers EEC, Delmar, NY

**Topic:** What's hatching in NY?

**Speaker:** Julie Hart

The New York Breeding Bird Atlas is conducted every 20 years and aims to document the distribution of all breeding birds statewide. This is the third time an Atlas has been undertaken in NY, which will help document changes over the past 40 years. This monumental effort is achieved with the help of a massive team of community scientists. Over 3000 birders have already contributed to the current Atlas by submitting observation of breeding birds to the project! We've completed three years of the five year survey. Come find out what's been recorded so far, what remains to be done, and how you can help. Every observation helps conserve the birds of New York State.

Julie started birding while working as a bird conservation intern in Ithaca. She traveled for several years doing field work around the globe, then spent several years chasing high elevation birds around the Northeast and Hispaniola as the coordinator for Mountain Birdwatch, before she went on to earn her Master's degree studying the impacts of climate change on Cassia Crossbill in southern Idaho. After spending several years abroad, she is now the Project Coordinator for the third Breeding Bird Atlas in NY. Atlasing is her favorite type of birding.

## Upcoming HMBC Programs *(continued)*

**Date and Time:** Monday, March 6, 2023, 6:30PM

**Location:** Zoom Only

**Topic:** TBA

**Speaker:** Bernie Grossman

**Date and Time:** Monday, April 3, 2022, 6-9pm

**Location:** Century House, Latham, NY

**Topic:** HMBC Annual Dinner (Please see separate announcement on page 141 )

**Date and Time:** Monday, May 1, 2023, 6:30pm

**Location:** TBA

**Topic:** TBA

**Speaker:** Warren Greene

**Date and Time:** Monday, June 5, 2023, 6:30pm

**Location:** TBA

**Topic:** Birding India

**Speaker:** Gregg Recer

## South Africa 2022 by Jim de Waal Malefyt (continued)

We next flew to Johannesburg and then traveled east in two vans to the arid areas of Dullstroom and Mount Sheba. Along the side farm roads we encountered many Blue Cranes, the national bird of South Africa, as well as several species of Pipits, Sparrows, and Larks. We constantly looked to the sky to see Buzzards, Kites, Eagles, and Vultures taking advantage of warm thermals. The “mist forests” of Mount Sheba had a variety of Swifts and several birds we didn’t see elsewhere including Knysna Turaco eating fruit, Grey Cuckoo-shrike, Narina Trogan, and Olive Woodpecker.

Our next destination was Kruger NP, but we made a short stop on the way to find Mountain Wagtail and White-throated Robin-Chat. In Kruger NP we added two new guides who drove open safari vehicles which allowed for great photography. Kruger NP was a great place to see birds as well as a variety of wildlife. Since this was the end of the dry season, most wildlife was found in the vicinity of rivers and water impoundments.

Highlights of the trips were seeing areas where my Dutch ancestors had lived as well as over 350 new bird species and the big mammals of Kruger NP (e.g. Lion, Elephant, Giraffe, Buffalo, and Leopard). The bouncing pelagic trip was also an experience we wouldn’t soon forget to meet up with numerous Albatrosses, Petrels, and Shearwaters fighting over netted fish near the trawler. Some other unexpected occurrences were the national two-hour, rolling, electrical blackouts every day and the three people and one guide who contracted COVID-19 on the tour. It may not have been the relaxing tour some couples in their 70s may have wanted to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but for us it surely was adventurous and exciting seeing new birds every day with all the large wildlife, colorful plants and scenery!



Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, off-shore False Bay



Cape Sugarbird, Kirsten Bosch Botanical Garden, Cape Town

## South Africa 2022 by Jim de Waal Malefyt *(continued)*



Knysna Turaco, De Hoop



Lilac-breasted Roller, Kruger National Park



Lion, Kruger National Park



Southern Ground Hornbill, Kruger National Park

*Feathers*

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

c/o Five Rivers EEC

56 Game Farm Road

Delmar, NY 12054