

October 2016
Volume 76 No 5

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

Feathers

FRIENDS OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY IMPORTANT BIRD AREA (IBA) NEEDS YOUR HELP

Please write or email the Town of Fort Edward today to show your support for Friends of the IBA's proposal to assist the NYS DEC purchase of 180 acres of critical habitat in the Washington County Grasslands IBA! You can use the following letter or create your own.

This property is critical to endangered and threatened grassland bird conservation in the IBA! It provides vital habitat for ten of eleven of New York's grassland bird "Species of Greatest Conservation Need," including state endangered Short-eared owls, Northern harriers, American kestrels, Eastern meadowlarks and Grasshopper sparrows. It also connects existing state lands off Blackhouse Road with Friends of the IBA's conserved lands.

If this property is not conserved now, it will likely be developed!! NYSDEC has been working to purchase the land from a willing landowner for the past three years. The purchase has been held up because the state cannot pay taxes on Wildlife Management Areas and it requires the Fort Edward Town Board's approval to move forward.

Friends of the IBA submitted a proposal to make a payment equal to the amount of lost tax revenues to the Fort Edward Town Board at their July 11 Board meeting. For approximately \$3800/ year we can protect 180 acres of critical habitat in the IBA forever!

Please write or email the town to show your support for our proposal!

(a sample letter is shown on p 82)

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President's Corner

There is no President's message this month.

=====
The Friends of the Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area
 is still seeking support from the public for their efforts to protect
 undeveloped land in the Ft. Edward area. Please see their web site for
 more information about how you can help:

<http://www.ibafriends.org/ActionAlertAugust>

Chris and Bernie Grossman will be moving to Florida in the spring or
 summer of 2017, so HMBC needs someone to replace Chris as
Publications Chair and someone to replace Bernie as **Field Trips Chair** in
 the 2017/ 2018 year.

Bird Belize with the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society January 7-16 2017

In addition to its rich Maya history and Caribbean-influenced culture the small country of Belize offers birders a huge diversity of migrant and resident species in lush and varied ecosystems. Join the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society and explore habitats that include wetlands, pine forest, tropical moist forest and a mangrove inland on this unforgettable 10-day adventure. This trip is limited to twelve birders. Space will go quickly.

For more information and to register, visit: <http://holbrook.travel/saasbelize>

You, too, can contribute to Feathers!

- Do you have a birding story or photos that might be of interest to other birders?
- 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:
Chris Grossman at bgrossman@nycap.rr.com.

Send all paper submissions to:

Chris Grossman

7 Nott Rd.

Rexford, NY 12148

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 Chris Grossman bgrossman@nycap.rr.com or (518) 399-9159 if you are interested in purchasing a copy. Checks should be made out to ***Hudson Mohawk Bird Club*** and should be sent to:

Chris Grossman

7 Nott Rd

Rexford, NY 12148

Erratum

On page 48 of the June 2016 Feathers (V. 76, N. 3), the caption of the trogon photo on that page was in error. It should read "Gartered Trogon" instead of "Orange-bellied Trogon."

Field Trip Reports

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge

August 20, 2016

Five HMBC members traveled to Queens on August 20 to visit Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge (JBWR), which is part of the Gateway National Recreation Area. A last minute change in leaders became necessary, and we were lucky that Shai Mitra and Pat Lindsay graciously agreed to lead the group. Shai is a biology professor at the College of Staten Island, and one of New York's leading bird experts. He is especially knowledgeable about shorebirds, which were the primary focus of our visit to JBWR. The refuge is surrounded by the saltmarshes and waters of Jamaica Bay, but the best birding location tends to be a fresh water pond known as the East Pond. When the tide is high on the bay, much of the saltwater foraging habitat goes underwater, and as a result the birds come to the shallow East Pond to forage. The pond is managed specifically to provide habitat for shorebirds and waders, with large areas of shallow water and mudflats. Our trip had been planned so that we would be there around the time of high tide, and the birds did not disappoint. There were hundreds of shorebirds and waders present. The most abundant shorebird species, as usual, were SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER, SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER, and LEAST SANDPIPER. We had excellent opportunities to view STILT SANDPIPERS alongside SHORT-BILLED DOWITCHER and LESSER YELLOWLEGS while Shai instructed us on the differences between those species. Other comparison studies we were able to make included a WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER surrounded by SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPERS, and a juvenile LITTLE BLUE HERON in a crowd of SNOWY EGRETS. Some of the other highlights were a single juvenile RED KNOT, a RUDDY TURNSTONE, and several AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHERS. Both BLACK-CROWNED and YELLOW-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS were present, along with numerous GLOSSY IBISES. A total of at least 54 species were tallied in our 6-hour visit, including 15 shorebird species. We got lucky with the weather, as heavy thunderstorms occurred for much of the day over the North Shore of Long Island, but did not affect Jamaica Bay. Shai's enthusiasm over teaching others about shorebirds was much appreciated, and we all learned a lot. Perhaps the most important lesson for birders learning shorebird identification is to focus on shape, size relative to nearby birds of known species, and behavior. Since plumage is highly variable within each species depending on age and molt cycle, it is not one of the first factors to consider in order to identify a shorebird.

- John Kent

Cohoes Flats/Peebles Island

August 21, 2016

In spite of the uncomfortable heat and humidity, it was my pleasure to be the coordinator of the HMBC field trip to Cohoes Flats and Peebles Island. Having done some scouting at these spots several times in the last week, I was expecting a rather poor showing of birds. For example, on August 20 Least Sandpiper was the only shorebird species I could find. But, the 9 excellent birders who arrived definitely proved me wrong. As usual the trip started at Cohoes Flats. We were unable to walk out on the Flats because the water level was a little too high. But, with many eyes searching the rocks we eventually found 7 shorebird species: KILLDEER, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, GREATER YELLOWLEGS (1), SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER (1), LEAST SANDPIPER (20), PECTORAL SANDPIPER (2), and SHORT-BILLED

Field Trip Reports...(continued)

DOWITCHER (1). We also did well in the raptor department with OSPREY, BALD EAGLE, RED-TAILED HAWK, and MERLIN. While at the Flats we watched an AMERICAN CROW high in a tree harassing the MERLIN by “caw”-ing at him from just 2 feet away. The considerably smaller MERLIN refused to budge, and the CROW eventually gave up and left. Other noteworthy species at the Flats included a GREEN-WINGED TEAL, several GREAT BLUE HERONS, A GREAT EGRET, GREEN HERON, a kettle OF TURKEY VULTURES, CHIMNEY SWIFTS, a RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, and BELTED KINGFISHER.

As the coordinator I eventually dragged the group away from the Flats so that we could move on to Peebles Island. There we got great looks at BALD EAGLES and OSPREY. And, we saw one and perhaps 2 PEREGRINE FALCONS. Along the perimeter trail we spotted some elusive vireos in a few trees just below us. We eventually decided that we had RED-EYED, WARBLING, and PHILADELPHIA VIREOS. It may have been too early for migrant warblers but some of us saw a YELLOW WARBLER and an AMERICAN REDSTART. At the final tally, we counted a remarkable 50 species. Thanks to all the participants who demonstrated how many eyes and lots of persistence can really make a difference in birding.

- John Hershey

Roosevelt Truck Trail

September 4, 2016

Six of us walked the Truck Trail with an early start in order to improve our chances of finding boreal species. We walked north to south starting at 7:30 AM on a beautiful day. BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEES and a PILEATED WOODPECKER were heard by those waiting for the car shuttle to end. We heard a BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER calling soon after we started and then saw a male working the dead spruce trees near us. Lots of what we thought to be GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS worked the tops of the spruces, but they were too distant and in bad light to see sure of their ID.

The woods were quiet in general with some mixed flocks of chickadees, RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH, TUFTED TITMICE, RED-EYED VIREO, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS and warblers. The latter were mostly YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLERS, but included two BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLERS. A skulking spotted thrush species kept in the foliage making it impossible to identify. A calling BROAD-WING HAWK flew over.

The Truck Trail generally descends from north to south, and we passed from the boreal spruce woods into predominately hemlock and finally mixed deciduous/hemlock woods. Near the boreal/hemlock transition, we spotted a trio of GRAY JAYS working the woods. Unlike winter behavior, they kept their distance, but they did give excellent views.

There is a handicap-accessible campsite at about the Trail's halfway point. We met a trio of birders who were walking the Trail in the south to north direction. They continued on a bit further, and, when we saw them again at the south parking point they told us that they had seen a pair of BOREAL CHICKADEES with a flock of BLACK-CAPPED.

Total species count was eighteen.

- Bernie Grossman

Upcoming HMBC Programs

Birding the Costa Rica Highlands

Speaker: John Hershey

October 3, 2016 - 7:00pm - 8:30pm

William K. Sanford (Colonie Town) Library 629 Albany Shaker Road, Loudonville, N.Y.

This program will describe a recent birding trip to the Costa Rica highlands centered around two popular ecolodges: Rancho Naturalista in the Carribean foothills and Savegre Mountain Lodge in the Talamanca Mountain range. The highlight of the trip was seeing the dazzling, Resplendant Quetzal, a sacred bird to the Aztec and Mayan civilizations. Many other colorful and iconic tropical birds will also be illustrated with photos including: herons, toucans, parrots, trogons, oropendolas, hummingbirds, warblers, finches, and tanagers.

Juncos!

Speaker: Dawn O'Neal

November 7, 2016 – 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

William K. Sanford (Colonie Town) Library 629 Albany Shaker Road, Loudonville, N.Y.

Dawn O'Neal, Executive Director of the Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station, will speak about juncos. More details coming.

A joint event with the Audubon Society of the Capital District.

Birding in Cuba

Speaker: Rich Guthrie

December 5, 2016 – 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

William K. Sanford (Colonie Town) Library 629 Albany Shaker Road, Loudonville, N.Y.

Rich Guthrie will speak about his birding trip to Cuba.

Upcoming Audubon Programs

Juncos!

Speaker: Dawn O'Neal

November 7, 2016 – 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm

William K. Sanford (Colonie Town) Library 629 Albany Shaker Road, Loudonville, N.Y.

Dawn O'Neal, Executive Director of the Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station, will speak about juncos. More details coming.

A joint event with the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club.

On Nature

The Unexpected

by Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

If nothing else, this summer has provided me an education in keeping an open mind, or if you will, expecting the unexpected. As birders, you may relate to the strong draw a spot may have because one time many years ago a good bird was seen there. On one of our Christmas counts we approach a certain suburban parking lot with great expectation every year because several years ago we spotted a Merlin there. I tend to relate that way to nature study in general. If I have found an interesting insect in a particular flower I tend to check those flowers forever after. It has made me somewhat of a “lagger” on group walks! But what surprises this approach has brought! One of my favorite plants to check is Goldenrod. This beautiful, bright plant always seems to be teeming with all sorts of insects. Check the head of a Goldenrod any time, and among its hundreds of tiny flowers you may find a wide variety of bees, ants, wasps, spiders, and myriad other insects. I check the flowers a lot, mainly hoping to find one of my favorites, the Goldenrod Crab Spider. I had one once a few years ago, and have been checking Goldenrods ever since. Always expecting, usually disappointed. This past August I was sure I had one. It was a still day, and yet one little portion of the flower head was noticeably moving. I was separated from the flowers by a ditch which had some poison ivy in it, so I wasn't that close. But I could see the unmistakable movement of the flower. Positive I had a crab spider at last, I checked from many different angles to get a better look, but I just could not see the spider. Not really knowing the exact location of the spider I aimed my lens at the part of the flower that was moving the most, and snapped several photos.

Wavy-lined Emerald Moth Caterpillar



Upon reviewing the images later I was flummoxed by the total absence of any kind of insect or spider whatsoever. But that just seemed impossible, since something had been causing the flower to move on a day with no wind and when no other flowers were in motion. So I persisted, and eventually thought there was something funny looking about a branch of brownish flowers on this particular Goldenrod. Zooming in, I saw the unmistakable shape of a caterpillar; a caterpillar covered with dead flowers! It was then I learned about the Camouflage Looper, the larva of the Wavy-lined Emerald Moth. This fabulous little caterpillar hides among the flowers it feeds on by covering itself with bits of the flower itself! So it was not the flower of the

Goldenrod I saw moving, but rather the little caterpillar covered with Goldenrod flowers! Wow, there is no end to the wonders of nature.

So of course, the next day (OK, I admit it, every day since) I was checking flowers for more Loopers. A beautiful Joe Pye Weed caught my eye. How cool would that look, a small caterpillar covered with the long purple petals of that flower! As I peered into the big flower head I did see something different, but wait! Could it be? Here among the purple fronds of the Joe Pye Weed? Yes, there it was, in the last place I would expect it, the Goldenrod Crab Spider!

Goldenrod Crab Spider



I still linger over flowers. I still hope to find interesting things among them. But I try to keep my mind open about what those interesting things might be. I am learning to expect the unexpected!

COMMON NIGHTHAWKS AT THE PINE BUSH DISCOVERY CENTER

The club had a Common Nighthawk Count on August 22 – 26 at the Pine Bush Discovery Center. Scott Stoner took these photos during the count.







AN ALTERNATIVE TO LEAD BULLETS

Lead poisoning is a serious problem for both wildlife and humans, but it is easily preventable. Bullet and ammo manufacturers now offer numerous premium non-lead options for pistols and rifles. Hunters are continuing their proud tradition of wildlife conservation by using these non-lead alternatives, solid copper, tipped alloy-core, frangible bullets, and small caliber/rimfire bullets.

Humans and Lead

- There is no known “safe” level of lead. Even small amounts can affect the nervous system and cause anemia and increases in blood pressure.
- Children are especially vulnerable to lead poisoning. It can cause aggressive behavior, learning disabilities, and a permanently lowered IQ.

Wildlife and Lead

- Bald eagles and other large birds are poisoned when they eat lead fragments in carcasses and gutpiles.
- Wildlife rehab centers report spikes in lead poisoning each year during and after the fall deer/elk hunting season.
- Eagles and other large birds feed in groups, so one carcass can poison several birds.

For more information and a list of available calibers, visit: huntingwithnonlead.org

FRIENDS OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY IBA..... (continued)

A sample letter is included below:

DATE

Your Name here

Your Address

Your phone number and email

Attn: Mr. Mitchell Suprenant, Supervisor, and Town of Fort Edward Board Members

Dear Sirs,

I support Friends of the IBA's proposal to make a payment to the Town of Fort Edward equivalent to the lost tax revenues from the NYS DEC purchase of 180 acres of critical habitat in the Washington County Grasslands IBA from willing landowner Merrilyn Pulver.

This property is vital to efforts to conserve critical habitat in the Washington County Grasslands IBA for New York's endangered and threatened grassland birds! Please help us save this property for the birds and for kids and adults who find relaxation and wonder watching them.

I visit the IBA to watch the birds. I often spend money at local businesses, stopping for gas and snacks on the way, or a meal at a local restaurant after I finish. With the addition of this 180 acres to the conserved lands and the opening of Friends of the IBA's Alfred Z. Solomon Grassland Bird Viewing Area I will spend even more time, and money, in IBA towns.

Please vote to accept Friends of the IBA's proposal and allow the landowner to conserve her property as her legacy to future generations.

Please be sure to include your name, address and contact info and email your letter to:

amahoney@roadrunner.com and llafond@ibafriends.org and

seresa@nyassembly.gov and little@nysenate.gov

OR Mail to:

- Fort Edward Supervisor, 118 Broadway, Fort Edward, NY 12828

Please send a copy of your mailed letter to:

Friends of the IBA, P.O. Box 82, Fort Edward, NY 12828

Upcoming Field Trips

OCTOBER

Saturday, October 1, NUTTEN HOOK (Columbia County, morning)

Coordinator: Kathy Schneider 248-8665 falline@nycap.rr.com

Nutten Hook is part of Stockport Flats, a Hudson River Estuarine Research Reserve site in Columbia County. The area includes the remains of the largest ice house on the Hudson as well as a loop trail that borders the river for a quarter mile. The return path cuts inland through oak woods, abandoned farmland, and tidal marshes. Bald Eagles and early fall migrants are expected.

Meet at 8:00 AM in the parking area by the pavilion, which is west of the railroad tracks, and the buildings on Ice House Rd. Ice House Rd. is off Route 9J in Stuyvesant.

Sunday, October 2, VISCHER FERRY FALL MIGRANTS (Saratoga County; morning)

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

Fall migrants are the main attraction for this field trip. Species that breed further north or in higher elevations may stop here on their way south. We will search for a variety of waterfowl, raptors, kinglets, wrens, warblers, and sparrows. Meet at the preserve entrance at 8:30 am.

Saturday, October 8, WOODLAWN PRESERVE (Schenectady County; morning)

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

The Woodlawn Preserve is located in the Southeast corner of Schenectady County abutting the western edge of the Pine Bush. The area contains a flood control pond, forested sand dunes and general wetland habitat. Trips in prior years have seen migrating warblers and sparrows. The pond may attract various waterfowl.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in front of Petsmart in Mohawk Commons at the corner of State Street and Balltown Road (Balltown Rd. side). We will carpool the short distance to the Preserve.

Sunday, October 9, FIVE RIVERS ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTER, DELMAR (Albany County; morning)

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

We'll walk about 2 miles over generally flat terrain with some small hills, passing through a variety of habitats. Migrating sparrows are often abundant at this time of the year, with a good chance of Lincoln's and White-crowned as well as more common species. Both species of kinglet may be present, as well as Yellow-rumped Warbler, Palm Warbler and Blue-headed Vireo. A late Nashville, Black-throated Green, Blackpoll or Magnolia Warbler might be found. Wood Duck and other waterfowl are possible, as well as

Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks and Merlin. Wet grass and muddy spots may be encountered, so waterproof footwear is recommended.

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

Saturday, October 22, COLLINS LAKE (Schenectady County; morning)

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

We will visit Collins Lake to view late migrating waterfowl from the beach and the east side of the lake. We will also take a walk east along the north side of the Mohawk River for fall sparrows. Fox Sparrows have been seen in previous years. Foliage will be off of the trees to make finding LBJ's (Little Brown Jobs) a bit easier.

Meet at the western end of the Gateway Bridge at Jumpin' Jacks in Scotia at 8:00 a.m. Bring a scope if you have one.

NOVEMBER

Saturday, November 5, TOMHANNOCK RESERVOIR (Rensselaer County; morning)

Coordinator: Bernie Grossman 399-9159 bgrossman@nycap.rr.com

Join us for a morning trip around the Tomhannock Reservoir. We hope to find a variety of waterfowl, resident and migrant passerines and possibly shorebirds. Rarities have turned up at the Tomhannock in the fall and we often find Bald Eagles.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking area at the intersection of Lake Shore Dr. and NY Route 7 at the west end of the causeway. Bring a scope if you have one.

Saturday, November 12, HAWK WATCHING AT FRANKLIN MT, (Oneonta; morning) Coordinators:

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

Gary Goodness 862-9260 ggoodness@verizon.net

This trip's goal is migrating Golden Eagles. The Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch is located on the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society Sanctuary, overlooking Oneonta, NY. It is noted for late-season flights of Red-tailed Hawks and Golden Eagles. The middle of November is the best time for viewing Golden Eagles migrating south.

As always here, weather plays a big part of any success. Dress for November weather as the top of Franklin Mt. can be wet, cold and windy. Don't be uncomfortable because you are cold and wet. Folding chairs are a good idea.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Park and Ride Lot on Route 20 in Duanesburg. Take Interstate 88 to Exit 24, Duanesburg. At the exit, turn left toward Rt. 20. At Rt. 20, take another left. The Park and Ride Lot will be a short way on the right.

Sunday, November 13, VISCHER FERRY NATURE AND HISTORICAL PRESERVE, CLIFTON PARK
(Saratoga Co; morning)

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

On this trip we'll be looking for migrant waterfowl and winter residents. Rusty Blackbirds are often observed at this time of year. We will start at the main entrance to the Preserve. We will also explore some of the lesser known areas of the Preserve, such as Ferry Drive and the area around the Vischer Ferry Power Plant where Bald Eagles and migrant waterfowl are often seen.

Meet at the main entrance of VFNHP at the Whipple Bridge at 8:30 a.m.

DECEMBER

Saturday, December 17, SCHENECTADY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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

Monday, December 26, SOUTHERN RENSSELAER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Phil Whitney, 477-9050, prmlwhitney59@nycap.rr.com

Saturday, December 31, TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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

Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

c/o Five Rivers EEC

Game Farm Road

Delmar, NY 12054