

October 2022
Volume 82 No 5

Feathers

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

Winter Birding in New Mexico January, 2022 by Chris and Bernie Grossman

COVID put a two year hiatus on our birding travels with our having five planned trips cancelled. These included an initial attempt at New Mexico; England/Scotland; Finland (2x); and The Netherlands. Our usual tour company, Field Guides, Inc., Austin, TX, restarted their tours within the US last fall. They required all participants to be fully vaccinated and masked. Tours to foreign countries are now starting, too, but now participants must also be boosted.

The tour ran for a long week starting on January 8, and we continued on from there to California and Arizona to visit family. Each of the latter places gave us more opportunities to bird. In New Mexico, the tour traveled along a north/south line (I-25) through the center of the state from Elephant Butte Lake and Percha Dam State Parks in the south, through Albuquerque and Santa Fe, and into the hills above Los Alamos.

We traveled with Field Guides, Inc., Austin, TX, with our guide being Doug Gochfeld with whom we traveled in Israel. Five other birders accompanied us. New Mexico has its own unique cuisine that features a choice of red or green referring to the color of the chilis in the sauce. Our trip started with a first night feast at a huge New Mexican restaurant in Albuquerque offering many choices with both sauces.

The next morning, we drove to the Los Tijeras (The Scissors) Ranger Station on a pueblo archeological site. Here we saw several different color morphs of Dark-eyed Juncos, interior form Bushtits (Figure 1), and a few Steller's Jays. These were also interior form having white facial markings. Also present were several Western Bluebirds and a couple of Juniper Titmice (Figure 2). These are the interior form that was split from the old Plain Titmouse with the western coastal form now being called the Oak Titmouse.

(continued p116)

Inside This Issue...

Winter Birding in New Mexico by Chris and Bernie Grossman.....	99
President's Corner.....	100
HMBC Birding Guide.....	101
Upcoming Field Trips.....	102
Writers Page.....	105
On Nature.....	106
Field Trip Reports.....	109
Upcoming HMBC Programs.....	113
Meet HMBC Treasurer Ellen Pemrick.....	124

HMBC BOARD
Officers

President:

Tristan Lowery
51 Mereline Avenue
Albany, NY 12209
646-323-8914 tristanlowery@gmail.com

Vice-President::

Eric Mulho
103 Bender Lane,
Delmar, NY 12054
518-439-6592 mohorising@aol.com

Secretary:

Patricia Fuller
1301 Sumner Ave
Schenectady, NY 12309
(518) 421-2318 pfuller310@gmail.com

Treasurer:

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

Directors

Gregg Recer gregg_recer@alum.rpi.edu

Jim De Waal Malefyt
518-283-2363 dewaalmalefyt@gmail.com

Cindy Edwardson
cjredwardson@gmail.com

Amanda Dillon - amadillon@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: Cassandra Davis
daviscass33@gmail.com

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

Publications: Denise Hackert-Stoner
denisehstoner@aol.com

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

Reist Sanctuary: Doug and Maria Conklin
Douglas.s.Conklin@gmail.com

Social: vacant

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

Youth: Vacant

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Summer went by quickly this year – so fast I forgot to write for the President's Corner in the last issue of *Feathers*. In my defense, I was getting for a trip out of town at the time and missed the deadline. And I imagine others were similarly busy in this first summer since the pandemic where things seemed nearly back to “normal”.

The club always slows down a bit during the summer, with the field trip schedule usually going on a bit of a hiatus and our monthly programs on hold until September. But now that it's fall, we're back to business as usual and it's a good time to take stock of things. Thanks to our many wonderful volunteers – from new recruits to members who've been generously dedicating their time to the same tasks for years or even decades – the club continues to run smoothly. But we could always use more help! Below is a list of areas where we'd welcome new volunteers:

Committees

- Currently, several committee chairs are vacant: Audit, Conservation, Outreach, Social, and Youth. If you're a club member and are interested in serving as chair of any of these committees, please email me at president@hmbc.net. Generally, these positions don't require that much time over the year and can be as ambitious in their scope as you see fit.

Field trips

- After many years of organizing our birding outings as Field Trip committee chair (as well as ably leading many, many of those trips in that time), Tom Williams is stepping down for a well-deserved break. We're grateful that Naomi Lloyd will be taking over for Tom as the new chair, though she's already been serving on the committee for many years herself. If you have any field trip ideas for 2023 or are interested in serving as a field trip leader, please email me at president@hmbc.net – the sooner the better, as we're working to get our calendar for next year in order. And on behalf of the club and the board, I'd like to thank Tom and Naomi for their service over the years!

Feathers

- Our bimonthly club publication relies on entirely on volunteer submissions and we welcome all club members to contribute their birding and nature writing – anything goes, really: field trip reports, personal birding stories and anecdotes, prose, poetry, etc. Submissions can be sent to our editor, Denise Hackert-Stoner, at denisehstoner@aol.com.

Thank you. And if you have any other questions or suggestions on how we can improve the club, again, feel free to email me at president@hmbc.net.

Good birding and have a great autumn, everyone!

Tristan Lowery
President, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club
president@hmbc.net

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

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Saturday October 1, 2022, 8AM-Noon

Location: Saratoga Battlefield

Coordinators: Susan Beaudoin smbeaudoin1@gmail.com

This popular trip features beautiful foliage and a good chance to see hawks, woodpeckers, sparrows, bluebirds and late migrants as we walk the woods and grasslands of the battlefield. We will carpool to several trailheads. You never know what will turn up.

Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot near the park's visitor center off SR 32.

Saturday, October 8, 2022, 8AM-Noon

Location: Five Rivers EEC

Coordinator: John Kent 518-424-2234 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 at Five Rivers EEC in Delmar.

Sunday, October 9, 2022, 8AM-Noon

Location: Bog Meadow Brook

Coordinator: Ron Harrower ronharrower14@gmail.com

Bog Meadow Brook Trail, an old rail trail just east of Saratoga Springs, runs along the northern edge of a swamp and consists of wetland habitat with two ponds with a wet mixed forest in between. In October, sparrows are moving in and late migrants are still present. There should be a good variety of waterfowl and lingering shorebirds are possible.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the trailhead pull-off on Meadowbrook Road, about 0.3 mile west of Stafford Bridge Rd/Rt. 67. If we have enough participants, we will stage some vehicles at the Lake Ave end to save walking the round trip.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS (CONTINUED)

Saturday October 29, 2022, 8AM-Noon

Location: Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, Lions Park

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

On this trip along the Mohawk River and its backwaters in Niskayuna, we will look for waterfowl, gulls, and sparrows. Our walk may take us as far as the farm fields on Niska Isle. We will retrace our path back to Lions Park. This is approximately 3.5 miles total.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Lions Park in Niskayuna, located along Rosendale Rd. near the intersection with Niskayuna Rd. Bring a spotting scope if you wish to scan the waterfowl groups.

Sunday October 30, 2022, 6PM

Reservation Deadline for Long Island in Winter Trip, December 10-12, 2022

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

Saturday November 5, 2022, 8AM-Noon

Location: Collins Lake

Coordinator: Bill Lee 518-374-3426 bileej@hotmail.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 the trees to make finding LBJs (Little Brown Jobs) a bit easier.

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

Sunday November 13, 2022, 8:30AM-Noon

Location: Vischer Ferry Nature and Historical Preserve

Coordinator: John Hershey 518-371-3114 hersheyj@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. The new hike/bike trail from the Clamsteam Tavern location to Ferry Dr. is completed, and this will open new areas to the east of the Whipple Bridge. The leader may choose to go in this direction.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the VFNHP main entrance, at the intersection of Riverview and Van Vranken Rds. in Clifton Park.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS (CONTINUED)

Saturday November 19, 2022, 8:30AM-Noon

Location: Tomhannock Reservoir

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

Join us for a morning trip around the Tomhannock Reservoir. We hope to find a variety of waterfowl as 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 December 10-Monday, December 12, 2022 (Out of Area, overnight stays)

Location: Long Island in Winter

Coordinators: Gregg Recer & Cathy Graichen 518-330-4552 (GR, c) 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.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS 2022

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](http://theaudubonsociety.org).

Saturday, December 17, SCHENECTADY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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

Saturday, December 24, SOUTHERN RENSSELAER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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

Saturday, December 31, TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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

WRITERS PAGE

No Writers Corner This Month

ON NATURE

Cicada

By Denise Hackert-Stoner

The Greek poet Homer tells a story about Eos, the goddess of the dawn, who was in love with a mortal named Tithonus. Eos asked the god of all the gods, Zeus, to allow Tithonus to become immortal, as she herself was. But in her asking, Eos forgot one important detail. She forgot to ask that Tithonus not only live forever, but also that he never grow old. So poor Tithonus never died, but he grew older and older, and more and more shriveled, until he finally was so small and so shriveled that he turned into the first cicada.

And so we have cicadas. They've been on this earth for a very long time. Some fossil records are over 200 million years old. Part of the superfamily Cicadoidea, in the order of true bugs (Hemiptera), today there are about 3,000 cicada species, and they live all over the world except in Antarctica. Not bad for a shriveled old guy!

Of course, we know cicadas mostly by their amazing capacity for creating sound. The male cicada is equipped with a drum-like organ called a tymbal, located at the base of his abdomen and controlled by muscles that can expand and contract the tymbal, creating sound. The sound from one cicada can reach up to 120 decibels, among the loudest of all the insect sounds on earth. To keep from damaging his own auditory organ (tympanum), the male cicada is able to partially disable his tympana while singing.



Annual Cicada

ON NATURE (CONTINUED)

Another facet of cicada life is their lengthy period in the nymph stage. Most annual cicadas live underground as nymphs from 2-5 years. The periodical cicadas (species *Magicicada*), which occur only in North America, have extended their nymph stage by 13 or 17 years, depending the species. These cicadas emerge synchronously, by the billions, as we experienced just last summer, the summer of 2021. One theory suggests that this long period between emergences may decrease predation on this specific genus, as few predators live long enough to depend on it for food. Likewise, even opportunistic predators like birds, bats and some mammals would have a hard time consuming the extremely large numbers of periodical cicadas that emerge all at once very infrequently.



Copyright Denise Hackert-Stoner, Naturelogues 2013
Periodical Cicada

The much more frequently encountered annual cicadas do not synchronize their emergence. So although each species may spend one, two, or up to nine years underground, there are some cicadas that emerge each summer. Both annual and periodical cicadas emerge in their final instar (nymph stage), attach themselves to tree bark or a branch, and emerge as adult cicadas. Although adults do have the capacity to eat, they consume very little, and only live for about two months, if they can avoid predation by mantises and cicada killer wasps.



© Denise Hackert-Stoner, Naturelogues 2021
Emerging Periodical Cicada



© Scott Stoner, Naturelogues 2020
Cicada Killer

ON NATURE *(CONTINUED)*

During their brief time above ground, males attract mates by singing. Females use their sharp ovipositor to scratch the bark off twigs or small branches, creating little nest areas into which they lay eggs. They will continue this with many twigs and branches, laying up to 400 eggs.



Annual Cicada Ovipositing

The eggs will incubate for about six weeks, at which time the nymphs emerge, fall to the ground, and using their strong forelegs, burrow through the soil to about a depth of two feet. They carve out small living chambers near the roots of trees, which provide their nourishment for the next few years. Finally they emerge, and begin the cycle all over again.

Cicadas provide the sound of summer. When the birds have stopped singing, the cicadas begin. These interesting songsters have been around long before humans. We have woven their song into legends, myths, and symbol. For many they symbolize longevity, resurrection, even immortality (watch out, Tithonus!). Whether we view them as mythic or nuisance, cicadas are here to stay. They are our companions, our summer friends.

- Sources: Science Direct, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/immunology-and-microbiology/cicada>
- Wikipedia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cicada>

Field Trip Reports

August 22, 23, and 24, 2022

Night Hawk Watch

Coordinators: Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

The annual HMBC Nighthawk Watch was conducted from the parking lot of the Discovery Center at the Albany Pine Bush over the evenings of August 22 through 24, 2022. On Day 1, 20 nighthawk enthusiasts spotted 7 Common Nighthawks, all after 7:35 pm; plus a low flying Peregrine which sailed through the parking lot about 7:50 PM !

The second night was affected by much-needed rain, but 6 hopeful birders checked the radar and discerned that a break in the rain would coincide with tonight's count. The rain ended right about 6 PM and we were treated to a lovely double rainbow over the Albany Pine Bush! Unfortunately, we saw zero nighthawks, and stopped the count at 7:23 PM when the rains resumed. Highlights of the 15 species we did have were a male Baltimore Oriole in the sunlight, and fish crows flying toward us under the rainbow. One person stayed later and did see a (the?) Peregrine again, at approximately the same time as the previous night!

On the third night, with mostly clear and comfortable weather, 21 observers were rewarded with 52 Common Nighthawks between 6 PM and 8 PM! (plus two more about 5:40 by early-arriving birders!) Highlights were a distant flock of at least 39 individuals around 7 PM, off to the west well beyond Rt 155, flying generally south. Several other nighthawks flew low enough over the parking lot about that same time in good light, providing excellent views.

Many thanks to all the sharp-eyed observers for spotting all the nighthawks, to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve for the use of their parking lot, and to the passing nighthawks for giving us all a reason to gather in person at this annual census/social event of our bird club!



Photo by Denise Hackert-Stoner



Photo by Curt Morgan

Field Trip Reports (continued)

Sunday, August 28, 2022

Cohoes Flats/Peebles Island

Coordinator: John Hershey

The HMBC field trip to Cohoes Flats/Peebles Island took place this morning with a small group of birders meeting at the Flats. The best bird of the morning, in my opinion, was the Snowy Egret found by Naomi and Steve at about the time we were ready to leave the Flats for the adjacent Peebles Island State Park. This bird is likely the same one which was spotted for several days at Falls View Park. At the Flats we also got good looks at a Peregrine Falcon, at least 2 Bald Eagles, a pair of Osprey, a Great Egret, many Great Blue Herons and a Fish Crow. A noteworthy bird that only one person saw was a Winter Wren at the entrance to the Flats. The Peregrine Falcon helped to flush some shorebirds allowing us to eventually find a few Least Sandpipers, Semipalmated Plovers, and Greater Yellowlegs at a considerable distance.

At Peebles Island we had a long walk around the perimeter where we added some fairly common birds to our list. At one spot where Black-capped Chickadees and Tufted Titmice were especially active, we struggled to identify some of those “confusing fall warblers” but, in the end, only managed to identify American Redstart, Yellow, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. A female Scarlet Tanager seen by just one person is worthy of mention. A trip to the Cohoes area wouldn’t be complete without some Chimney Swifts in an aerial display. Depending on whose list we picked, the final species count was more than expected at about 46.

September 3, 2022

Albany Rural Cemetery

Coordinator: Tristan Lowery

We only had three birders total (including me as the leader) show up for yesterday morning's Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club field trip to Albany Rural Cemetery, but we set out anyway and had a perfectly good stroll around the property on a late summer day in spite of the low turnout. The cemetery wasn't completely dead but birding was a bit slower than I had hoped, and we didn't run into any obvious southbound fall migrants - and certainly not in any large numbers. Still, we managed to find 33 species, including all six locally expected woodpeckers, both nuthatches, a good number of Eastern Bluebirds, and some species that will be leaving us in the coming weeks, like Eastern Wood-Pewee, House Wren, Common Yellowthroat, and Scarlet Tanager. And one of our party was an inexperienced birder and really appreciated being shown around and having songs and calls and brief glimpses of flitting birds amongst the still-green leaves readily identified.

Good birding!

Field Trip Reports (continued)

Sunday, September 18, 2022

Saratoga Spa State Park

Coordinator: Naomi Lloyd

Six birders met this foggy morning at Saratoga Spa SP to explore the "picnic table graveyard", an area



that includes a pond, capped landfill, woods, and lots of scrubby spots. The parking lot yielded a few species including Black-throated Green and Chestnut-sided Warblers, and the first of numerous Eastern Bluebirds. The usually productive graveyard circle was quiet but we picked up a pair of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks. Clearing skies brought us some raptors: Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawks, and a lovely low flyover by a female Harrier. Other birds seen in edge habitat were Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos, and a cooperative Bay-breasted Warbler with a bit of warm coloring on his sides. We got a very brief look at a vireo with light eye markings and yellow on the belly and chest - probably a Philadelphia, but not a good enough look to be conclusive.

Total for the morning was 35 species, five of them warblers. We missed the sparrows which are usually a highlight of this trip.

eBird checklist:

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



Field Trip Reports (continued)

Woodlawn Preserve

September 25, 2022

Coordinator: Naomi Lloyd

In the smallest field trip in my experience, two birders explored the dunes of Schenectady's Woodlawn Preserve. Habitat restoration continues, meaning the trails change radically from year to year as the overgrown woods are cleared. The stands of young aspen and birch that can be productive at times were quiet this year, however. We saw only three warbler species - Palm, Yellow-rumped, and Common Yellowthroat. Sparrows were more numerous with at least five species including well-seen one Savannah. Not many other passerines were found, and one flycatcher gave tantalizing but unconvincing looks - I couldn't quite make it into an Olive-sided. An Osprey circled repeatedly over the pond, diving for fish.

We topped out at 35 species, on the low side of average for this trip.

eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S119428808>

Non-avian sightings: Fringed Gentians doing well in their usual field (blossoms past their prime) and soccer ball-sized Puffball mushrooms (ditto)

Good birding!



Upcoming HMBC Programs

Date and Time: October 3, 2022, 6:30-8:00 PM

Location: Five Rivers EEC, Game Farm Road, Delmar (In-Person program)

Topic: Grassland Birding in Colorado and Saskatchewan – A Birder’s Retirement Gift to Himself

Presenter: Tim Colborn

After deciding to retire in late 2017 from a 31-year career in banking, Tim Colborn knew that he wanted to do more birding travel. Visiting former colleagues in Colorado and a childhood friend in Saskatchewan helped shape a 2018 cross-country birding trip that would primarily focus on grassland sites and birds. Tim will share photos and his fond memories of hopping in his car and driving west to the birds!

Tim is a Life member and past Vice President of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. He developed a love for the outdoors while spending his summers as a boy in the Eastern Townships of Quebec hiking, swimming and fishing. A quiet encounter with a Great Blue Heron sparked his interest in birds and birding. In the proceeding 30+ years, he has birded in more than 40 states around the country as well as in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Ireland and Spain. Much of Tim’s birding has centered in New England and the Midwest where he has led field trips, participated in Breeding Bird Surveys and Christmas Counts, and given presentations to bird clubs. Tim has served on the Board of the Ohio Ornithological Society as Northeast Regional Director for from 2016 through 2018 and is the current President since 2019. He also served as a Board member for the Western Cuyahoga Audubon Society in 2017 and 2018.

Lark Bunting



Upcoming HMBC Programs *(continued)*

Date and Time: November 7, 2022, 6:30-8:00 PM

Location: Five Rivers EEC, Game Farm Road, Delmar (In-Person program)

Topic: Distant Shores: The Nature of Hawaii

Presenter: Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

Born of Fire and shaped by time and human activity, the Hawaiian Islands are the most isolated archipelago in the world. In this slide program we explore the four largest islands, from the youngest and still growing "Big Island" of Hawaii to the oldest and lushest "Garden Island" of Kauai, and Oahu and Maui in between. We will showcase ongoing volcanic activity at Hawaii Volcanoes National Park and the stark moonscape of Maui's Haleakala. Across the islands and in a setting of stunning tropical beauty, we look at Hawaiian birds, both native and introduced, and the variation from windward to leeward sides of the islands. Sadly, many of Hawaii's native birds have already been lost and some that remain are in deep trouble. We'll explore some last vestiges of native habitat and highlight the birds that depend on them, discussing threats and efforts to save them. Join us for a revealing look at one of the most remote and beautiful places on earth!

Denise and Scott are long-time avid birders, and past officers of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. They've given numerous slide presentations to birding, nature, and other groups across New York State, and teach birding and nature photography in the adult education programs of several Capital Region school districts. Scott is retired from a 31-year career with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation; Denise is an ordained priest in the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests and is on the faculty of the Peoples Catholic Seminary.

Their award-winning nature photography has been widely exhibited in New York State, and appeared in numerous publications, including *Birder's World/Birdwatching*, *National Wildlife*, *New York State Conservationist*, *Albany Times Union*, and several books. Their bird photos have been featured on several covers of *The Kingbird*, the journal of the New York State Ornithological Association. In 2021, their feature article was published in the international *Wild Sojourns Magazine*.



Upcoming HMBC Programs *(continued)*

Date and Time: December 5, 2022, 2022, 6:30-8:00 PM

Location: Five Rivers EEC, Game Farm Road, Delmar (In-Person program and Holiday Party)

Topic: The Birds of Vischer Ferry Preserve

Presenter: John Hershey

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

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.

Winter Birding in New Mexico *(continued)*

We were walking back to the van to move on when Doug heard the raucous calls of Pinyon Jays in the woodline around the site. Rushing back, we saw a flock of at least 20 jays moving around a nearby feeder. These birds form gregarious flocks in the winter that move around looking for food. Finding these jays is hit or miss, so we were lucky.

The Sandia Mountains form a north-south line along the eastern side of Albuquerque. A road leads to the top of the ridge at the north end where the Forest Service has a lodge at 10,000 feet called Sandia Crest. When open, the lodge is a site for recreation all year around. We found snow with trails used for snowshoeing and skiing. In the winter, it is also a good place to see all three Rosy Finch species. These species tend to breed in the mountains farther north (Colorado) and are pushed south in winter. A local birder group has maintained a banding station at the lodge for years, and they capture and band Rosy Finches on weekends. This year was not a good winter for Rosy Finches, so we waited a couple of hours to get a fleeting, but still satisfying look at a flock of five Black Rosy finches. Fortunately this was the species we need as a lifer. Unfortunately they landed at the top of a distant pine for a brief time, so I got no good pictures.

After a late, but nice lunch (second best bacon cheeseburger ever), we walked through Embudito Canyon, a park on the edge of the city. The canyon has trails that go through desert scrub and up into the Sandia foothills. A Cooper's Hawk was perched on a large boulder near the entrance. While birds were scarce, we did get nice views of a Canyon Towhee and Cactus Wrens who were moving through the Cholla Cactus. We also saw a pair of Mule (Black-tailed) Deer.

The next morning, we started at Rinconara Canyon, another national monument, in this case, petroglyphs in the surrounding hills. Again this was an area of desert scrub surrounded by ridges of dark colored rock. Birds here, too, were scarce, but we did see many Common Ravens, including some chasing a Coyote. There were also a distant Crissal Thrasher and a distant Rock Wren. Doug had previously seen Sagebrush Sparrow in the scrub near the parking area, but they were absent this year.

We then headed back to Los Tijeras Ranger Station because Doug had gotten a tip about a special bird that was present. We parked in the drive to the maintenance area where we saw immediately saw a male Williamson's Sapsucker (Figure 3) working a pine tree next to the visitors' building. Doug had been expecting a female. The bird gave us several wonderful minutes of viewing before taking off.

After lunch, we headed southeast into the Estancia Valley which is a fairly flat agricultural area. We were treated to many Am. Kestrel on the power/telephone lines, many Ferruginous Hawks, Mountain Bluebirds, a couple of Horned Lark, a soaring Rough-legged Hawk, and single perched Prairie Falcon and Golden Eagle.

We left the Estancia Valley to head further south toward Socorro, our base for the next few days. We started to see Chihuahuan Ravens including a group of approximately 600 that were hanging around a harvested corn field.

The day's last stop was at the Bernardo Wildlife Management Area (WMA). The WMA is managed for Sandhill Cranes and white geese, and its fields can be viewed from a nice tower. This gave us a look at several thousand cranes packed into the fields with a big group of geese beyond them. The latter were mostly Snow Geese, but a few Ross's Geese were probable. As the sun set, we drove along a tour road to a parking area to watch the departing cranes (Figure 4) fly low over us in a steady stream.

Winter Birding in New Mexico (continued)

The Rio Grande River flows past Socorro to feed the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. Further down the river, old dams had created Elephant Butte and Caballo Lakes. The first lake is huge, but the drought had lowered its level by at least 150 feet. Still, we got excellent looks at Western and Clark's Grebe (Figures 5 & 6), American Coot, and a single Cattle Egret. From another overlook, we were able to see many different waterfowl; Ring-billed, Herring and a single Lesser Black-backed Gull(s). A pair of Verdin as well as Ruby-crowned Kinglets moved through the scrub.

The next stop was Percha Dam State Park along the Rio Grande. I was impressed by how small and slow moving the river was here. The park has many deciduous trees and is located in the main chili pepper growing region of the state. The trees carried a lot of mistletoe whose berries attracted Phainopepla, a silky-flycatcher (Figure 7). There were also Say's and Black Phoebe; Song, Lincoln's, White-crowned, and Chipping Sparrows; Audubon's form of Yellow-rumped Warbler; and a few Cedar Waxwing. Spotted Towhee and Pyrrhuloxia were also present. Driving away from the park and near some pepper fields, some of us saw our first Greater Roadrunner of the trip.

Later in the afternoon, we made a brief stop at Bosque del Apache NWR primarily to see what was open at the visitors' center and to bird the desert cactus garden/feeder area. The feeders were attracting lots of White-crowned Sparrows, White-winged Doves, and Gambel's Quail. A small flock of Lesser Goldfinch flew in, too. On the way back to Socorro, we stopped in a desert scrub area to look for Sagebrush Sparrow. Dinner both nights in Socorro was at Yo Mamma's, a surprisingly good place.

We returned to Bosque del Apache before dawn the next morning parking at a viewing deck on the main impoundment. Northern Shovelers in courting mode were the primary ducks present. As dawn approached, we moved further along the impoundment to watch the white geese fly in. Thousands landed right in front of the viewers. These were mostly Snow Geese with some Ross's Geese, too. The geese clustered together as the sun rose, and then at some signal, they started to leave. The pool was empty within a couple of minutes. It was spectacular!

After the geese left, we drove the tour route passing other sides of the major impoundments and more refuge fields. Notable sightings included more than a dozen Bald Eagles, a White-tailed Kite, Harrier and a close up Sora. We also had a look at a distant small herd of Collared Peccory (aka Javelina). We then made one more attempt to find a Sagebrush Sparrow (Figure 8) in a brushy field near the refuge. Finally two appeared to give good views and pictures.

After lunch in Socorro, the group headed north toward Sante Fe. Along the way we stopped briefly at a small group of fishing lakes on a Native American reservation south of Albuquerque. One lake had a nice flock of Cackling Geese. We had a good look at a distant Greater Roadrunner hanging out at the edge of a golf course.

Our base in Santa Fe was a nice hotel built in the old Spanish style and decorated with Native American paintings and textiles. The next morning had us driving up the mountains to the Los Alamos area with our first stop on a service road through Pueblo Canyon that led to the city's sewage plant. The area was mix of brush and pine trees. It gave us views of a flock of Pygmy Nuthatch that was moving through the tops of the pines. We were also able to hear a couple of Townsend's Solitaires calling.

Winter Birding in New Mexico *(continued)*

Continuing further up into the Jemez Mountains, we passed through Los Alamos and some of the National Laboratory facilities and finally to the Burnt Mesa Trail through an open grassland with scattered deciduous and pine trees. We were thrilled to find a pair of Lewis' Woodpeckers (Figure 9) feeding in a couple of the trees along with several Acorn Woodpeckers. We also had a flock of more than 50 Steller's Jays pass through the area. A herd of about 15 Elk was feeding in a nearby gully.

From here, we stopped at Upper Canyon and climbed down a snowy hill into a woods. More Acorn Woodpeckers (Figure 10) and a pair of Mountain Chickadees were viewed. The last birding stop was at the Parecito Ski Area which was not productive.

In the afternoon, Chris and I had a chance to visit the Georgia O'Keefe Museum near our hotel. O'Keefe was a famous resident of the Santa Fe area. I found the museum to be a bit of a disappointment. It was small and had none of her famous, colorful later works.

Our final stop was at the Alameda Open Space along the Santa Fe River in Albuquerque where we walked along a nice paved bike/hike trail by the river. A blind on the edge of a small pond near the parking lot provided views of Wood Ducks, Mexican Ducks, and a Wilson's Snipe that was foraging in the mud. Over a thousand gulls were lounging on gravel bars in the river. Most were Ring-billed Gulls, but we also spotted an adult each California and Herring Gull along with a second-year Lesser Black-backed Gull. The most interesting find was a first New Mexico ever juvenile Cook Inlet Gull, a hybrid of Glaucous-wing and Herring Gulls. I have always found hybrid gulls to be extremely difficult to sort out. A very tame Greater Roadrunner (Figure 11) greeted us back at the parking lot. It spent several minutes scurrying around our feet.

Chris and I continued to the Phoenix area to visit some of Chris' family. Her sister, Marilyn, took us birding in the Buckeye area southwest of Phoenix. Notable here were Vermillion Flycatchers and Burrowing Owls. Around Marilyn's house, we spotted Gambell's Quail, Gila Woodpeckers and Eurasian Collared Doves.

The final stop on our trip was at our son, Zack's, home in Ventura, CA. His back yard had California Towhee, Black Phoebe, and Anna's Hummingbirds. His house is a 15 minute walk from the beach and Ventura Pier (great fish tacos!). Along the shore were California, Western and Heerman's Gulls and Brown Pelicans.

It was great to get out doing birding travel again. Unfortunately, COVID and Putin cancelled our hoped for late May Finland trip. As a consolation, we drove around southern Florida in early May with stops in the Ocala National Forest, the Everglades, Key West and Dry Tortugas NP, and the Audubon Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary. In spite of it being dry season, we were able to pick up four lifers and get to see some nifty sights. Perhaps another article will follow about this. Our next trip hopefully is to the Netherlands in early December for birds and some great art museums.

Winter Birding in New Mexico *(continued)*



Figure 1. Bushtit, Interior form, Los Tijeras Ranger Station, Albuquerque, NM

Figure 2. Juniper Titmouse, Los Tejeras National Monument



Winter Birding in New Mexico *(continued)*



Figure 3. Williamson's Sapsucker, male, Los Tejas National Monument



Figure 4. Sandhill Cranes, Bernardo Wildlife Management Area

Winter Birding in New Mexico *(continued)*



Figure 5. Western Grebe, Elephant Butte State Park



Figure 6. Clark's Grebe, Elephant Butte State Park

Winter Birding in New Mexico *(continued)*



Figure 7. Phainopepla, a silky flycatcher, Percha Dam State Park



Figure 8. Sagebrush Sparrow. Bosque del Apache NMR.

Winter Birding in New Mexico *(continued)*



Figure 9. Lewis' Woodpecker. Burnt Mesa Trail, Jemez Mtns., Los Alamos



Figure 10. Acorn Woodpeckers. Upper Canyon, Jemez Mtns., Los Alamos



Figure 11. Greater Roadrunner. Alameda Open Space. Albuquerque, NM

Meet HMBC Treasurer Ellen Pemrick

1. How long have you been on the Board and what are your responsibilities?

I've been treasurer since 2005. My responsibilities include maintaining the Club's financial records, processing incoming deposits (from dues, donations, book sales, etc.), paying our bills, filing required paperwork with the NYS Charities Bureau and the Town of Niskayuna, and preparing and submitting an annual budget for the Board to review, edit, and adopt.

2. What do you do for your day job?

I'm the sole proprietor of a consulting business specializing in economic development and market analysis. I often collaborate with land use planners, architecture and engineering firms, site selection consultants, and brownfield revitalization experts.

3. What hobbies or interests do you have outside of birding?

Photography, reading, genealogy, yoga, and doing the crossword puzzle in the *Sunday New York Times*.

4. How did you get into birding?

A co-worker gave me a bird feeder as a housewarming gift when I bought my first house, and I quickly became familiar with backyard birds like goldfinches, chickadees, and cardinals. Shortly after that, I met my husband and we started hiking in the Adirondacks. There was one bird I kept hearing when we hiked; I called it the "Beethoven Bird" because of its pretty song, but it was a long time before I laid eyes on the bird. It turned out to be a White-Throated Sparrow. That was my spark bird.

5. Do you have any destination birding dreams?

If I had a couple million dollars, I would love to see every woodpecker species in the world (which is a lot!). In real life, I've been pursuing my dreams by visiting birding destinations in the U.S. including Cape May, coastal Maine, the Rio Grande Valley and High Island in Texas, the Salton Sea in southern California, and Washington State. The next place I'd like to go is Colorado to see sage grouse, prairie chickens, and rosy-finches.

6. Do you have a favorite bird?

I don't have a single favorite bird, but among my favorites are Pileated Woodpecker, Rose-Breasted Grosbeak, Black-and-White Warbler, Brown Thrasher, Wood Thrush, and Great Crested Flycatcher.

7. What is your favorite place locally to explore birds?

That's a tough one. I enjoy the variety of different places and habitats we have in the area. I've always had a soft spot for Five Rivers, though I haven't been there as often as I used to since we moved to Saratoga County.

Meet HMBC Treasurer Ellen Pemrick *(continued)*

8. What is your most surprising birding experience?

It wasn't until I joined HMBC that I met people who "chase" rare birds. In December 2002, an acquaintance talked me into driving to Boston with him and his brothers to see a gyrfalcon that had been hanging around a large industrial building for several weeks. We parked on the top floor of a parking garage next door and set up a scope. It was bitterly cold and we had to keep returning to the car to warm up, but we did eventually find the gyrfalcon, which was a lifebird for nearly everyone in the group.

A few years later, I decided to drive with a friend to Quabbin Reservoir in Massachusetts to see a reported Varied Thrush, a bird from the Pacific Northwest. I had no idea what to expect or whether we would even find the bird. When we arrived, we found a line of cars packed with birders, all waiting for the thrush to emerge. Lured to the spot by a pile of birdseed, the thrush showed up less than 15 minutes later, giving us all a wonderful show as it dined with juncos and blue jays.

9. Do you have any specific hopes or goals for HMBC?

Nothing specific except to make people who are interested in birds aware of the Club and encourage them to participate in field trips, programs, etc.

Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

c/o Five Rivers EEC

56 Game Farm Road

Delmar, NY 12054