



Cayuga Bird Club

Newsletter

April 2001

President's Message

I was dismayed last night trying to hear the woodcock that has been in the back field since the first weekend in March. I thought perhaps this latest cold might have finally got the best of him. Just last week I sat on the back porch in the early morning darkness and listened to its calls and flight. A treat to hear before local traffic started up. A gentle breeze was blowing, and soon I heard the cooing of a Mourning Dove followed closely by the calls of a Cardinal. But this morning, I was delighted to hear that call again, coming from far back in the field. The land around here is fairly wet by nature, and I think the ground beneath the snow is still soft. There is also a stand of white pines in the back that may have had better shelter and less snow beneath them. That first evening I heard the woodcock, it was snowing a good steady pace. I continued to hear him daily, either end of the day, in snow or rain! It's supposed to be in the 40's by the weekend, hang in there!

The guest speaker for our Bird Club's March meeting drew a full house. Dr. Gary Stiles gave a delightful talk on hummingbirds and the flowers they interact with. Hearing about the tropics reminds me again of the incredible variety of plant and animal diversity found there. I believe all of us took away something new we learned about hummingbirds and plants. Many thanks to Matt Williams, president of the Student Birding Club at Cornell, and Matt Medler, who both worked diligently to make Gary's visit to Ithaca a reality.

Our new Club Historian, Cindy Twardokus, is presenting bits of historical

information about the Cayuga Bird Club in our newsletter. Last month she submitted the handwritten description of the purpose of the newly formed club, written by one of the founders back in October 1913. One of their first conservation efforts was to create a bird sanctuary. Now some 88 years later, the Ithaca area has *many* organizations to help with the conservation efforts to preserve our Finger Lakes biodiversity.

This cold snowy March has birders yearning for spring migration and despite the weather, migration is well underway. Flocks of Snow Geese have been seen throughout the month heading north with hundreds gathering at the northern end of the lake. More species of waterfowl are being seen, brilliant in their breeding plumage. It's the time of year to make a journey around the lake and to Montezuma to catch this wonderful spectacle before they leave.

For our April meeting we are fortunate to have Kevin and Jay McGowan bringing slides and stories to share with us about their trip to Newfoundland last August. They attended the annual meetings of the American Ornithologists' Union and on their travels took "several" pictures with the infamous digital camera. Hope you can join us.

Club Officers

PRESIDENT	Gladys Birdsall	257-0130 (H)
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SECRETARY	Linda Clougherty	539-7546 (H)
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MEMBERSHIP	Linda Clougherty	539-7546 (H)
DIRECTORS	John Confer Kevin McGowan Ken Rosenberg	539-6308 (H) 844-3728 (H) 844-5176 (H)

The Cayuga Bird Club

The Cayuga Bird Club meets at 7:30 pm in the Morison Room (106) of Corson/Mudd Hall, Cornell Campus, on the second Monday of every month except July and August. Most meetings consist of a short business segment followed by a feature presentation. The Club also sponsors several field trips each month and publishes a monthly newsletter. Membership is \$10.00 per year and includes a one-year subscription to the CBC Newsletter. The year begins in September. To join, send a check to: Cayuga Bird Club, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850.

Call the **Finger Lakes Bird Line** for the latest in birding news...**254-2429**

Birding on the Edge: A Trip to Newfoundland

April Program Presentation

By

Dr. Kevin and Jay McGowan

ABSTRACT: Dr. Kevin McGowan and his son Jay drove to St. John's, Newfoundland to attend the American Ornithologists' Union meeting in August 2000. They will talk of the things they saw during their three-week camping trip, and illustrate it with only some of the 2,222 digital pictures they took along the way.

BIOGRAPHIES: **Kevin McGowan** has been the Curator of Birds and Mammals at Cornell University since 1989 and an avocational birder since 1970. He got a Master's Degree working with the ecology of small mammals on reclaimed strip-mines, then turned to bird behavior for his PhD. He says, "I am interested in just about anything that has to do with birds, from behavior to systematics to ecology to physiology. I work mostly, however, with behavioral ecology, and especially social behavior. My PhD thesis concerned the social behavior of young Florida Scrub-Jays. My current work with crows is related; crows have similar social systems to jays: many offspring remain with their parents for several years and help them raise subsequent broods. I am gathering data on nest success, survival, social interactions, and life history strategies." Ithaca residents are used to the sight of "Kevin's crows"; they have vary-colored numbered wing tags, and observers are urged to report their whereabouts.

Jay McGowan has been actively birding for 10 of his fourteen years. He has had a passion for birds and other animals all his life and has said, "I was born for birding! I can't remember not being interested in birds. My father might have had some influence, too." Father and son have long been a tight birding team. Together, they've birded out west and in Florida and recently have added digital photography to their birding skills.

HOUSE FINCH SIGHTINGS NEEDED

As part of an ongoing study of House Finches, our research team at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology is initiating a summer field project to understand the breeding behavior and recruitment of these birds in Ithaca, NY. Because House Finches nest on or near porches, trellises, and other human-made structures, we are seeking information on the locations of singing male house finches or breeding pairs building nests within a 15 km radius of Cornell University.

We would really appreciate if you could let us know if you see House Finches courting or carrying nesting material, or if you find a nest.

Thank you,

House Finch Disease Survey
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, New York 14850

E-mail: vc42@cornell.edu

Phone: (607) 254-2469

Fax: (607) 254-2104

Véronique Connolly

The History Corner
Cindy Twardokus, Club Historian

Following is a copy of an article from the Ithaca Journal printed in early November, 1913.
It describes the first meeting of the Cayuga Bird Club. Enjoy!

LAB OF O/VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Birds in Forested Landscapes Needs You!

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Birds in Forested Landscapes project needs volunteer bird watchers to help gather information about the relationship between the size of a forest patch and the likelihood that a given species will occur there. Understanding the relationship between birds and their habitat helps land managers develop the most effective ways to manage forests for the birds that depend on them. This is especially important for birds of high conservation concern, like the Prothonotary Warbler. BFL is gathering information for some 48 species representing all regions of North America, an expansion of the project's earlier focus on thrushes and Cooper's and Sharp-shinned hawks. To find out more about BFL, visit <http://birds.cornell.edu/bfl>, e-mail forest_birds@cornell.edu, or write Cornell Lab of Ornithology/BFL, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. To sign up, call the Lab at (800) 843-2473; outside the U.S. call (607) 254-2473.

Calling All Birdhouse Landlords!

The Birdhouse Network asks people of all ages and backgrounds to put up nest boxes ("bird-houses") and collect valuable information about each box location, habitat characteristics, and number of eggs and nestlings in the nest. They report this information over the Internet to Cornell Lab researchers, who analyze the data to help determine what if any environmental factors contribute to nesting success. TBN recently announced their "Most Wanted List" of cavity-nesting birds 16 species for which we have fewer than 50 records. These include Prothonotary Warbler, Mountain Chickadee, Eastern Screech-Owl, and American Kestrel, all of which are also showing population declines. The TBN online data form also requests basic information about pesticide treatment near nest boxes. To find out more about The Birdhouse Network, visit <http://birds.cornell.edu/birdhouse> (while there, visit TBN's popular Nest Box Cam for a peek into the secret lives of cavity-nesting birds via live video images taken from inside nest boxes across North America), e-mail birdhouse@cornell.edu, or write to Cornell Lab of Ornithology/TBN, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. To sign up to put your birdhouse observations to work for TBN, call (800) 843-2473 in the U.S. or (607) 254-2473.

Help Golden-winged Warblers

The beautiful little Golden-winged Warbler is a species of high conservation concern to biologists and birders alike. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Golden-winged Warbler Atlas Project (GOWAP) is designed to determine the population status and habitat and area requirements of the Golden-winged Warbler and the Blue-winged Warbler (a competitor to Golden-winged Warblers for breeding areas), as well as their hybrids. GOWAP engages birders and professional biologists to survey and conduct point counts at known and potential breeding sites of Golden-winged Warblers from May through June. To find out more, visit <http://birds.cornell.edu/gowap>, or e-mail forest_birds@cornell.edu. To sign up, call (800) 843-2473 in the U.S. or (607) 254-2473.

Minutes of the Cayuga Bird Club

March 12, 2001

Submitted by Linda Clougherty

Gladys Birdsall called the meeting to order. Visitors were welcomed. Recent sightings and comments were exchanged: killdeer, towhee, song sparrow were seen recently. A gyrfalcon was seen 3/12/01 at Fairhaven State Park, and a horned grebe was seen at Oswego along with many long tailed ducks and other ducks. Snow geese were seen at Union Springs.

Announcements:

Field trips:

- March 16 - a night trip to Connecticut Hill lead by Bill Evans.
- March 24 – Stewart Park and Myers Point lead by Gladys Birdsall.
- April 9 – Dryden Lake lead by Gladys Birdsall
- April 11 – Various localities in the south end of the basin lead by Ben Fambrough
- Next Bird Club meeting is April 9 and will feature Kevin and Jay McGowan’s slide presentation of their trip to Newfoundland.

A question was raised as to the operation of the Bird Line. The recording is not coming through clear. It was recommended that the machine be repaired or replaced.

Laura Stenzler volunteered to provide cookies for next month’s meeting.

Matt Medler read the basin list.

The evening’s program was presented by Dr. F. Gary Stiles, Professor of Biology at the National University in Bogata, Columbia, and co-author of *Birds of Costa Rica*. The title of his presentation was, “Hummingbirds and Flowers: Uneasy Ecological Partners.”

Meena Reports on a Trip Seeking Owls

“Hi Bill,

On the way back home I was stopped by state troopers for a sobriety check on 366 near Tower Road; they had blocked the road and were checking everyone:

Police: How much did you drink today?

Me : Drink? What?

Police : Drinks

Me: Nothing (I wanted to say half a gallon of water)

Police: Where are you going?

Me : Home

Police: Where is your home?

Me: Ithaca

Police: Where are you coming from?

Me: From Owling (He glares at me, I almost was going to say owl hunting and remembered our encounter with police in Savannah on Muckrace so just said owling)

Police : Where would that be?

Me : All over the places, Freese Road, Dodge Road, Connecticut Hills and some secret golf course.

Police stares at me, probably thinking that I surely needed a sobriety check. Then I added “It was Cayuga Bird Club Field trip to look for breeding owls.”

He looked again at me, was not sure what to make of it, then finally said, “Drive home safely”.

I am sure he thought something was wrong with me. But I thought it was fun. Of course I would have not enjoyed if he had insisted on some kind of breath analyzer test. I almost wanted to tell him that we went to secret places to see some secret owls, and I can’t spill out the beans.

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Cayuga Bird Club
c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Rd.
Ithaca, NY 14850

**Agenda: April Meeting of the Cayuga Bird Club
Monday, April 9, 2001**

7:30 p.m. Business Meeting

- a) Good bird sightings and stories to share
- b) Announcements from the floor
- c) Other discussions
- d) Reading of the Basin List: Matt Medler

8:15 p.m. Program: Our guests tonight will be Dr. Kevin McGowan and his son Jay. *"Birding on the Edge: a Trip to Newfoundland"*. Kevin and Jay will share digital pictures and tell about their experiences while driving to St. John's, Newfoundland to attend the American Ornithologists' Union meeting in August 2000.

(See page 3 for further details.)

Refreshments will be served