



Cayuga Bird Club

NEWSLETTER

ESTABLISHED 1914

APRIL 2008

Exploring the Galapagos: Part I

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ANNE HOBBS

Like many of us, I have a short list of bird places I must visit, and the Galapagos has occupied the top spot for years. In December 2007 my husband, Peter, and I spent eight days on the trip of a lifetime, made even better by a sensitive, efficient, friendly, and capable company called Ecoventura (www.ecoventura.com/home.aspx).

On the recommendation of Ecoventura, we preceded our trip with two nights in Guayaquil, just in case there were flight problems. We flew from there to Balta where one of our nature guides was waiting for us. A two minute bus ride brought us to a dock littered with sea lions where zodiacs were ready to take us to the M/Y Letty, our home for the next eight days. By the time we had our welcoming drink and something to eat, our luggage was in our cabins and we were under way. Magnificent Frigatebirds flew directly over our ship, almost touching the top—an indication of what was to come. For hours we stared in awe and clicked away.

We were hoping to land on a small spit of sand north of North Seymour that first afternoon to get good looks at shorebirds, but the waves made landing far too dan-

gerous. Instead we boarded two zodiacs (called pangas locally) and boated along the coast of the island, getting close to nesting Blue-footed Boobies and other birds. We saw people walking around on the island, and I asked why we couldn't do the same. I got my first lesson in the rules that govern tourism in the Galapagos. There are approximately 156 ships that serve the tourist industry there, and that number is fixed by law. Each ship has a specific plan, and they do not deviate from it. On this afternoon we did not have permission to land on North Seymour.

The attraction of Galapagos isn't just beautiful and exotic birds, and it certainly isn't the scenery. It's the experience of walking among the wildlife and having them not care in the least that you are there. On Monday morning we had a dry landing on Tower Island, also known as Genovesa (all islands have at least two names), the farthest north that we would venture. We got out of our zodiac at the bottom of the Prince Philip's Steps. As I crested the top of the steps, I found a juvenile Nazca Booby right in the middle of the path, and it wasn't moving. Looking beyond this youngster,

I saw a barren flat land with scrubby, bare bushes—uninviting in the extreme but littered with birds and nests and eggs. Nazca Boobies make their nests on the ground, surrounding the nest with a circle of their droppings. It was clearly the breeding season because we saw eggs, nestlings that were mere blobs of feathers on limbs, and young at all stages. The birds made no attempt to keep us from approaching the nests or

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Magnificent Frigatebird just above ship on the first day of the trip.

WATCHING BIRDS IN THE ITHACA AREA FOR NEARLY 100 YEARS

CAYUGA BIRD CLUB

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The Cayuga Bird Club meets on the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Johnson Center on Sapsucker Woods Road. All programs and field trips are free and open to the public. Membership costs \$15 per year, \$10 for students, payable in September. To join, send a check (made out to "Cayuga Bird Club") to Cayuga Bird Club Treasurer, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Bird club members receive the Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter monthly from September through June. Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information above. Of particular interest are articles about local bird sightings, bird behavior, or birding hot spots, as well as original poetry, art, and photos.

Chickadee illustration in masthead by Karen Confer, waxwing illustration for native plants column and duck silhouette by Lena Samsonenko.

Visit the Cayuga Bird Club website at:
WWW.BIRDS.CORNELL.EDU/CAYUGABIRDCLUB

From the President

Spring must be on its way. The equinox is behind us, and after a long wintry absence, my bird dreams have returned. Sorry (and I'm sure for some of you, thankfully) I don't have any good stories to share, just general images of birds making their way into my dreams. Unfortunately, based on the temperatures outside and the fact that I am still wearing my long johns, snow pants, and parka to bird, it seems that someone has forgotten to alert Mother Nature to the fact that spring has arrived in the Cayuga Lake Basin. It really makes you wonder about the biological imperative that pushes the pioneer migrants north days or even weeks before the rest of the members of their species. Recently a few of us were debating whether or not the benefit of getting the best breeding site outweighed the possibility of becoming a starving, frozen popsicle. You certainly have to admire the drive that urges them to take that risk.



In preparation for the truly spring-like weather to come, the club recently participated in the Spring Waterfront Cleanup organized by The Waterfront District Association. Approximately ten club volunteers spent three hours bagging trash in Stewart Park and the Fuertes Bird Sanctuary. It was nice to see that most of the park was relatively clean. Trash was collected predominantly along the shore and around the edges of the swan pen. Within the sanctuary most of the trails were clear with the exception of the area closest to the high school and, coincidentally, nearest to the Cayuga Bird Club stone archway. One of the things I hope the club can accomplish this spring is cleaning up the archway. Currently the stone is covered in graffiti, and a large tree has fallen and is resting across the top of the arch. Ideally, I would love to see the archway moved to a more prominent location within the park, but I imagine that the cost would be prohibitive and for historic reasons some would not want to see it moved. If anyone is interested in joining me on a small committee to work in conjunction with the City Parks Department to address issues concerning the archway, please let me know.

The next volunteer opportunity for club members is the Friends of the Library Book Sale. Last fall a few of us had a great time working as book sorters

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Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
APRIL 7 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar and Art Opening Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Julie Zickefoose	In an intimate, story-telling setting, artist and author Julie Zickefoose will talk about her latest book, <i>Letters from Eden: A Year at Home, in the Woods</i> . Through anecdotes and readings, she will reveal the nature of her deep connection with wild things and the places they inhabit. Photographs from her 80-acre Appalachian "Eden" and watercolors from the book will provide a backdrop.
APRIL 13 Sunday 7:00– 11:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Dryden Lake Leader: Bard Prentiss Meet: Dryden Lake Pavilion	Join this half day trip to look for waterfowl on Dryden Lake and to visit birding locations in the Dryden area. Contact Bard at <prentissb@frontiernet.net> or at 844-4691 with questions.
APRIL 14 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Maiken Winter	Grassland birds are declining at a steeper and more persistent rate than any other group of birds in North America. In her presentation, "Local, regional, and global issues in grassland bird conservation," Maiken Winter, from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will describe conservation issues on a local scale, such as patch size and management, and on a global scale, such as agricultural intensification and climate change. See speaker profile on page 4.
APRIL 19 Saturday 8:30– 10:30 A.M.	Field Trip: Sapsucker Woods and Stewart Park Leader: Mark Chao Meet: Johnson Center*	This field trip is for children from ages 6 through 12. We will focus on identifying and enjoying common birds and learning about their life histories. The trip will begin promptly at 8:30 A.M. IMPORTANT: Group size is limited to 18 children. Preregistration is required. Contact Mark Chao at <markchao@imt.org> or at 257-3348 to register. Every child must be accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult for the entire field trip. Please bring your own binoculars.
APRIL 21 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Ted Floyd	Ted Floyd, Editor of <i>Birding</i> magazine, will present "Charles Darwin, Roger Tory Peterson, and the Future of Birding." Next year will mark the 75 th anniversary of the publication of Roger Tory Peterson's <i>Field Guide to the Birds</i> and the 150th anniversary of Charles Darwin's <i>Origin of Species</i> . This seminar will identify a major conflict between Peterson's and Darwin's world views, look at how tension between Peterson and Darwin largely was avoided in the 20th century, and examine how this tension is inevitable in the early 21st century — with significant consequences for how we appreciate and understand birds and nature.
APRIL 21 Monday	Newsletter deadline	Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
APRIL 26 Saturday 7:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Derby Hill Leader: Gladys Birdsall Meet: Johnson Center	Meet at the Lab of Ornithology's north parking lot (closest to 13) to carpool for this all day trip. Dress for the weather and bring a lunch, snacks, and something to drink. There will be a stop on the way. The trip may return by way of Montezuma depending on how the day goes. Contact Gladys at 257-0130 or at <gjb5@cornell.edu> with questions.

*Meet for field trips in the front parking lot unless indicated otherwise.

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
APRIL 28 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Rosalie Winard	With her camera Artist Rosalie Winard has witnessed and documented avian adaptations to habitat encroachment and the sudden disappearance and re-emergence of bird colonies. Her photographic adventures have included banding white pelican chicks in North Dakota; boating among Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, and White-faced Ibises in Utah; and sleeping in the midst of thousands of vociferous Sandhill Cranes in Nebraska. Her presentation, "An Itinerant Photographer of the Wetlands," will include photographs from her new book, <i>Wild Birds of the American Wetlands</i> , as well as photos from her personal archives.
MAY 3 Saturday 7:00 A.M.– noon	Field Trip: Local Hotspots Leader: Bill Baker Meet: Johnson Center	Meet at the Lab of Ornithology's north parking lot (closest to 13) to carpool for this trip to local areas where birds have been reported recently, especially new spring arrivals. Dress for the weather and bring a snack. Contact Bill at 275-0540 or at <billbaker@lightlink.com> with questions.
MAY 5 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Martjan Lammertink	In rainforests of Southeast Asia more woodpecker species co-exist than elsewhere in the world. Martjan Lammertink, from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, has examined niche evolution among woodpecker species in recent man-made forest fragments and on small islands that have been isolated since the last ice age. He also has researched the impact of rainforest logging on woodpeckers. In his presentation, "Spectacular Southeast Asian Woodpeckers: Niche Evolution and Logging Responses in Highly Diverse Communities," Martjan will present his findings and photographs from fieldwork with woodpeckers in Indonesia and Myanmar.
MAY 10 Saturday 7:00– 11:00 a.m.	Field Trip: Local Hotspots Leader: Gladys Birdsall Meet: Johnson Center	As songbird migration is reaching its peak, this half-day trip will look for the latest arrivals. Meet at the Lab of Ornithology's north parking lot (closest to 13). Dress appropriately. Bring a snack and drink. Contact Gladys at 257-0130 or at <gjb5@cornell.edu> for more information.
MAY 12 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Meena Haribal	Meena Haribal will present "Needles in the Haystack and Sparkling Gems Around the Ponds," an illustrated talk on Dragonflies and Damselflies (collectively known as odonates) found around the Cayuga Lake Basin and other nearby areas. Odonates, found in a variety of habitats, are amazing creatures with wide ranges of colors and habits. They have evolved a very distinctive mating system that no other insect seems to have. The talk will highlight their characters as well as interesting stories of the individuals whose photos will be presented. Of course, odonates are not birds, but they are an important component of the birds' food chain.

April Speaker Profile: Maiken Winter

Maiken Winter was born and grew up in Munich, Germany. She did her Ph.D. at the University of Missouri studying the effects of fragmentation on grassland birds. Maiken has worked on various grassland bird ecology and conservation issues. In April 2007 she was trained by Al Gore to give his presentation "An Inconvenient Truth" and has spent most of her time since then volunteering to educate the public on climate change issues while working as a researcher at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. 🐦

Volunteer at Fun, One-Day Bird Event

Volunteers are needed for the Lab of Ornithology's International Migratory Bird Day event on Saturday, May 17, 10:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M. Opportunities include helping with guided bird walks, interactive exhibits, or hands-on activities for children. Go to <www.birds.cornell.edu/birdday> for more information about the event, and contact Anne Rosenberg at 254-2109 or at <baj3@cornell.edu> to volunteer. 🐦

MINUTES: CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING

MARCH 10, 2008

BY SUZANNE HENDERSON

The Johnson Center Auditorium nearly was filled to capacity when President Susan Danskin called the meeting to order. She welcomed everyone and acknowledged that such a full house was undoubtedly the result of the evening's revered speaker, Stephen Kress. Some in the audience knew Steve from his various local and ornithological endeavors, but many more were enthusiastic alumni of Steve's very popular Spring Field Ornithology Course. The course will be offered again this year, its 31st year, teaching many new and returning students how to identify birds of the Cayuga Lake Region and beyond.

Susan thanked Don Marsh for providing cookies for the evening and another generous attendee, Barbara, who brought cookies unsolicited. Gladys Birdsall and Ann Mitchell volunteered to bring cookies for the April 14 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

- Susan again solicited members to volunteer to read the Cayuga Lake Basin List at Monday Night Seminars. She passed around a sheet for volunteers to sign up for particular seminars. She encouraged members not to be shy about reading the list.
- Volunteers also are needed for the Friends of the Library Spring Book Sale dates. As announced at the February meeting, club members will act as greeters and book sorters for customers preparing to make purchases. A brief period of training prior to the sale is required. Susan passed around a sign up sheet for volunteers to select dates and times that work for them. The club plans to cover the closing weekend of the sale, Saturday, May 10–Monday, May 12. This is an interesting way to help the Friends of the Library while introducing folks to the Cayuga Bird Club.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The speaker for the next meeting will be Maiken Winter from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. She will be discussing local, regional, and global issues in grassland conservation at a time when grassland birds are suffering a steep decline.

NEW BUSINESS

Susan reported that the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network and the Cayuga Waterfront Trail Initiative are sponsoring a waterfront clean-up on March 29. The Cayuga Bird Club will be participating in this project,

especially focusing on the Fuertes Preserve/Renwick Sanctuary at Stewart Park. Susan passed around a sign-up sheet for this event. Volunteers will meet at Stewart Park's large pavilion at 12:15 p.m. Trash bags and protective gloves will be provided. The Boatyard Grill will serve hot drinks and snacks.

RECENT SIGHTINGS

Recent birding highlights included tens-of-thousands of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles at Stewart Park, a Rough-legged Hawk, and an adult Golden Eagle.

BASIN LIST

Larry Hymes read the Cayuga Lake Basin bird list and recorded the birds identified in the basin in the previous week.

EVENING PROGRAM

Steve was introduced by Susan and warmly welcomed. His presentation, "Birding Around the World in 26 Days," took the audience along on his whirlwind world tour. Traveling by private jet, 88 passengers joined this natural history trip. Steve served as one of four lecturers for the group. His presentation illustrated beautiful and interesting birds but also encompassed the rich and varied flora and fauna, the geology, and the political and social history of each location. Steve presented an intense but brief taste of 13 locations: Peru (Lima, Cusco, MachuPicchu), Easter Island, Western Samoa, Australia (Great Barrier Reef), Cambodia, India, Tibet, Tanzania, Morocco, India, East Africa (Serengeti Plain), and Egypt. 🐦

President's Message

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and greeters during the evening hours of one weekend. We plan to participate in the spring sale as well. I should have more specific details to share with you at the next club meeting.

If you are aware of any other opportunities for the club to make a difference in the community, please share your ideas with me.



Volunteers Needed for Research in New York State

Help Researchers Study Impact of Deer Food Plots on Songbirds

BY WILL RICKS

I am studying the impacts of deer food plots on songbirds and small mammals in the eastern United States as part of my graduate study at the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia. The project is advised by Karl V. Miller, a professor of Wildlife Ecology and Management, and is funded by The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Quality Deer Management Association.

We are looking for volunteers with birding experience and, preferably, point count experience to survey birds at one or more of at least twenty sites in New York and Pennsylvania—some near Ithaca. The sites are planted with perennial clover in deciduous hardwood forest landscapes and are 1–5 acres in size.

The surveys will be conducted from June 1–30 as follows:

- Five single observer point counts of all avian species at each site: one in the center of the food plot, two along the edge, and two in the forest.
- Fixed radius counts at 25 meters from the observer.
- Four surveys per field season at each site
- Five minute surveys conducted sometime between 30 minutes after sunrise and 10:30 A.M.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact me at <ricksw@warnell.uga.edu> for an applica-

tion (email is preferred, but I can also be reached at (706) 247-4103). I will make a trip to New York and Pennsylvania in April to give more details about the project to volunteers. More information is available on the web site at <wericks.myweb.uga.edu>. 🐦

Help Researchers Locate Raptor Nests

BY CHRISTIAN NIVEN

I am a research assistant for the BioDiversity Research Institute, and I am conducting a collaborative study with the Wildlife Conservation Society, Harvard University, The Nature Conservancy, Cornell University, and Clarkson University to design a predictive mercury model for New York State. This study is also part of my master thesis.

We are sampling wildlife from aquatic-based food webs to determine mercury exposure levels. My portion of the study deals with raptors and will begin in May and end in July or August. I am targeting Red-shouldered Hawks, Cooper's Hawks, Sharp-shinned Hawks, Merlins, Barred Owls, and Eastern Screech-Owls. I am trying to locate raptor nest sites and general territory information around the Buffalo region, the northeast and southeast Lake Ontario region, the Lake Champlain watershed region, the Catskill region, and the Lake Onondaga area. If you are aware of any potential raptor nests or territories in these areas, I would greatly appreciate your input and collaboration. If you would like more information, please contact me at <chris.niven@briloon.org> or visit <www.briloon.org>. Thank you for your time and help. 🐦

FIELD TRIP REPORT: LOCAL HOTSPOTS, FEBRUARY 24

BY TOM JOHNSON

Our first stop for the day was Summerhill. Trip participants were pleasantly surprised to find two female/immature type Pine Grosbeaks gritting on Salt Road south of its intersection with Hoag Road. The birds were on the road for about five minutes before they flew up to roadside Norway spruces and fed on buds. Also along Salt Road were small numbers of Common Redpolls and Evening Grosbeaks, a dark Rough-legged Hawk, and a Northern Goshawk. The large redpoll flock that has been reliable at the Lacey Road feeders did not show when we stopped there, and the Hovel Chalet feeders were quiet as

well. Lick Street held a Northern Shrike, two Common Ravens, and a mink.

Next we headed to Myers Point, which was quiet with a Common Loon being the highlight. We then returned to Ithaca where we found a cooperative Red-shouldered Hawk at Sapsucker Woods near the White Barn—lovely bird. We finished the day at the Cornell compost site off Stevenson Road, which held many feeding and loafing gulls around noon, including an adult Lesser Black-backed Gull, a first cycle Glaucous Gull, and the continuing Slaty-backed Gull. 🐦

FIELD TRIP REPORT: CAYUGA LAKE, MARCH 8

BY SUSAN DANSKIN

On March 8 I led my first ever field trip for the Cayuga Bird Club. I was joined by five very brave souls: Don Marsh, Bob McGuire, Ann Mitchell, Judy Read, and her friend Doug. Not only were they willing to face the unknown with a novice leader, they also were willing to face the absolutely "lovely" weather. You know it is bad when Bob McGuire is the first one to put his scope away and get back into the car. But it could have been much worse, so I am not complaining.

As we headed out, at least twenty Wild Turkeys were spotted in a yard, flying across the road, and in a field on Drake Road. At Myers we huddled under a pavilion. Paul Anderson joined us briefly and pointed out a lone Snow Goose. Someone else discovered a Killdeer. Scanning a great distance out on the lake proved futile given the weather, but there was a nice collection of waterfowl in close. We all enjoyed pointing out life birds for Doug. Thanks to Judy for having the forethought to bring her Sibley's guide from the car so that we could point out identifying characteristics.

Center Road yielded nothing in the way of birds, but we did watch a mink crossing the field. Along the road to Long Point, we stopped to watch a mixed flock of Horned Larks and Snow Buntings moving back and forth from the roadside to the field. Although everyone was able to get good looks at those birds, only a subset of the group was able to get good looks at the two Lapland Longspurs that also were mixed in with the flock. Despite several repetitions of the phrase, "Okay, we'll just look for five more minutes," we were unable to relocate those birds. We did a cursory drive through Long Point but decided to press on since the weather was miserable and the lake appeared empty.

In Aurora we were able to use the boathouse as a screen from the weather, but despite diligent scanning, we were not able to turn up any grebes. We amused ourselves checking out a domestic goose and a pair of Northern Pintail. A stop in the Market provided yummy muffins for several cold, wet birders.

The factory pond in Union Springs yielded a small flock of Cedar Waxwings, but there were no bohemians in sight. A few folks got nice looks at a Belted Kingfisher. The Be Happy Cafe provided hot chocolate or coffee for several still cold, wet birders.

In the village of Cayuga, we all tried hard to find a Eurasian Wigeon among the few American Wigeon with no luck. Thousands of ducks, especially the redheads, made our search even more difficult. Doug most enjoyed the 50 or so Tundra Swans that were sitting on the ice and the 20 or so Hooded Mergansers that were in the cove. Since the rain had stopped temporarily, we decided to backtrack to Lettie Cook Memorial Forest for a brief walk. It was devoid of birds but absolutely beautiful with the icy snow coating everything in sight.

From the marina just south of Mudlock, we were hoping to find enormous rafts of Snow Geese that we could scour for a Ross's Goose. Neither species was present, but everyone got good looks at a Green-winged Teal.

The Mucklands were a vacant wasteland. East Road provided interesting driving conditions, but our vehicles had no trouble navigating the road. At Armitage Road we admired a large flock of Snow Buntings along the side of the road and an adult Bald Eagle sitting on a nest. Along Parker Road we observed a group of feeders being swarmed by Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds.

South of Cayuga Lake State Park we again tried to find Ross's Goose and Eurasian Wigeon to no avail. At Sheldrake the only loon we saw was a Common Loon. Despite the miserable weather, a stop for ice cream at The Creamery was enjoyed by all.

At our last stop, Stewart Park, we watched tens of thousands of presumed grackles, cowbirds, and Red-winged Blackbirds pouring into Renwick Preserve. We had a great debate about a dark mantled gull. Most signs pointed to it being a Lesser Black-backed Gull: smaller than a Herring Gull, yellow bill with dark spot, mantle darker than a Herring Gull but lighter than a Great Black-backed Gull. The only questionable field mark was the legs. To most of us they appeared pink not yellow, but since Ken Rosenburg reported a Lesser Black-backed Gull that afternoon, I am inclined to think we just weren't getting an accurate view of the leg color.

Thanks to all who joined me. The good company more than made up for the lousy weather. It was especially fun to watch Doug enjoy the discovery of so many life birds. As a rookie birder, he is to be commended for surviving the entire long, wet, cold, tiring day. I enjoyed leading my first trip and look forward to future trips. 🐾

Exploring the Galapagos: Part I

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the young; nevertheless, we had been instructed clearly by our nature guide to respect the birds and their space.

As we walked farther inland, we got our first glimpses of Red-footed Boobies. They build their nests in bushes right about at eye level, perfect for taking pictures. (The “bushes” are probably trees, but given the windswept nature of the islands, they don’t grow much bigger than bushes.)

We heard that we should go to the Galapagos now because the islands were being completely spoiled. That is not what we observed. The national park system and its rangers have been working hard over the last 20 years or more to repair the damage done by humans. Tower Island has been restored to its natural state. There are no inhabitants



Young Nazca Booby guarding the trail at the top of Prince Philip’s Steps on Tower Island.

other than the wildlife, no restrooms or snack bars, just birds, lizards, turtles and more birds. We visited uninhabited islands exclusively for the first five days.

On the afternoon of our third full day, we disembarked on Isabela, the largest island in the archipelago. As we strolled along trying not to trip over marine iguanas littering the path, we looked up and saw graffiti on the walls of the rocky cliffs. It dates back to the 1800’s and looked very out of place.

I did my first snorkeling off Bartolome, a speck of an island. The seasons aren’t very precise in the Galapagos, and although it was early December, it was still pretty chilly, both in the water and on land. So I put on a wet suit for the first time ever (available on the ship for free,

like everything except alcohol) and took the plunge. I have snorkeled in some pretty amazing places, from the east coast of Malaysia, before it was occupied by Vietnamese boat people, to the waters off Phuket and Hawaii, but the beach on Bartolome surpassed it all. I’m not even counting the sea lions that were strewn along the beach. The coral formations were beautiful and not as damaged as many I had seen in Hawaii, and the schools of fish were huge. Even better, there was no one telling me to stay within sight or to stay out of a particular area. I just kept on swimming wherever the fish took me.

Thursday morning, our fourth full day, we landed at Puerto Egas on Santiago island. In the scrub of the island, there were boobies, frigatebirds, Lava Herons and Swallow-tailed Gulls, all nesting together peacefully for the most part. We watched a juvenile Magnificent Frigatebird get thoroughly scolded by a Red-footed Booby when the youngster moved too close to the booby’s nest—within ten feet of where I was standing! The shore brought lots of opportunities for frustration in trying to figure out which Darwin finch was nestled in the plants (see photo on page 10), but along the lagoon there was no doubt about the oystercatchers, Great Blue Herons, and Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. If we looked out to sea, we could watch boobies diving into the bay from great heights and then being pursued by frigatebirds hopping to make off with their catch.

SEE THE MAY NEWSLETTER FOR PART II



Red-footed Booby on Tower Island.



Native Plants for Native Birds: Native Hazelnuts or Filberts (*Corylus*)

TEXT AND PHOTO BY JOEL BAINES

Two types of hazelnuts are native to our region: *Corylus Americana* (American hazelnut) and *Corylus cornuta* (beaked hazelnut). *C. Americana* grows from Southern Georgia to the St. Lawrence River and west to North Dakota and Oklahoma, but *C. cornuta* is more northerly and specific to our region, with a narrow band hovering around the great lakes, down through the Appalachians, southern Canada, and even some regions of coastal Oregon, Washington, and California.

The two hazelnut species are difficult to tell apart without the catkins or fruit—a nut framed by special bracts. In beaked hazelnut the bracts form one protruding end, up to an inch in length, and are covered entirely by little spines that will prick a finger, whereas American hazelnut bracts have a smoother surface and appear like two lovely scallop-edged flower petals sandwiching the nut, clam-like, between them. Also, *C. cornuta* has sessile male catkins, whereas those of *C. americana* dangle from short peduncles.



American hazelnut catkins (the male flowers) before blooming in spring.

For both plants the foliage is rough to the touch, is arranged alternately along the stem, and has prominent veins that emanate diagonally from a central vein. Hazelnuts, also known as filberts, are one of the first plants to bloom in spring: the long male catkins swelling noticeably to a vague yellow with the tiny purple female flowers on the same plant adhered close to the stem in little bunches of 3–5.

Unlike their European counterparts that form small trees, both native American filberts spread multistemmed shrubs that form extensive clumps over time. Despite my attempts to prune them into more formal shapes, frigates always appear unkempt

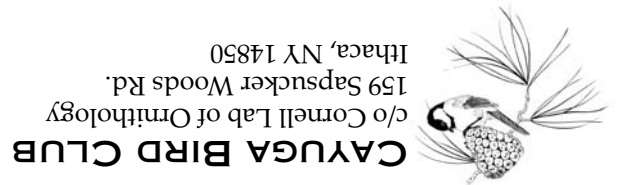
in my garden and are best left to naturalized situations (or to someone who knows better how to prune them). They also provide a ready source of cover that many birds appreciate.

Filberts feed foxes (I recommend repeating that to your children), deer, jays, woodpeckers, quail, Ruffed Grouse, and turkey. Sparrows of many types will finish any leavings. The squirrel is, above all others, the most successful harvester of American filberts, so much so that most other animals get no more than a taste. (The nuts are quite good and very similar in taste to commercial hazelnuts.) Bill Cullina, in his excellent book on native trees and shrubs published by the New England Wildflower Society, refers to squirrels as nervous little hazelnut farmers checking the crop daily for ripeness. In all truthfulness I have never seen a mature nut in the wild, possibly because they are both very palatable and very accessible: the largest plants only reach heights of 10 feet. Instead, I see immature nuts, followed inevitably by no nuts. Perhaps a saturation policy (planting many in a wide area) would provide some nuts for all.

Seedlings are available at the Tompkins County annual plant sale. These are very inexpensive, grow rapidly, and bear nuts in a few years. Miller Nurseries has several varieties and hybrids which are more expensive but larger. Hazels are very hardy plants and grow in sun to shade. Be sure to protect the young plants from deer browsing. Although this does not hurt mature plants, it can kill or severely set back seedlings. The bushy clumps are removed by some foresters because they can slow the growth of some trees within the clump, at least in the short term. Over time, however, the trees overtop the bushes, and take much of the light diminishing the hazels vigor and dramatically decreasing their seed production. As a result hazels are most prominent in disturbed areas, woodland openings, or near the edges of streams, pastures, or woodlands. A few hours of daylight will ensure some nuts. Although preferring loam and tolerating Ithaclay, filberts can grow in drier soil than most of the native shrubs we have discussed in this column.

The American filberts can hybridize with the European versions. However, the European species are more susceptible to the eastern filbert blight than the American species with which the blight coevolved. European filberts are, therefore, difficult to grow here, leaving the native plant as the best alternative. 🐿

Medium Ground Finch seen by Anne Hobbs on her recent trip to the Galapagos. See story on page 1.



Provided by Maiken Winter

NEXT MEETING APRIL 14

MAIKEN WINTER, FEATURED SPEAKER

“LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL ISSUES IN
GRASSLAND BIRD CONSERVATION”

SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS

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NATIVE PLANTS FOR NATIVE BIRDS:
NATIVE HAZELNUTS OR FILBERTS
(*CORYLUS*)