



Cayuga Bird Club

NEWSLETTER

ESTABLISHED 1914

APRIL 2009

NATIVE PLANTS BOOK NEARING COMPLETION

BY ANNE MARIE JOHNSON

The *Native Plants for Native Birds* book is well on its way to becoming reality. The book is on track to be out by July at the latest, and there's a chance it will be out in late May. Volunteers have finished proofreading, and I have started building the index.

Club officers decided to order 750 copies and have priced the book at \$18.95. The book is 175 pages plus front matter (title pages, table of contents, foreword, and preface) and index.

As the book nears completion, I want to acknowledge all the people who made it possible. The sidebar lists all the contributors that have funded the project so far. But lots more people donated their time. The most obvious, of course, are the writer and photographer—Joel Baines and David Ruppert. In addition to all the articles Joel wrote for the newsletter over the years, he added articles and other content, read through everything again, and checked all the photos. David spent countless hours photographing plants and then checked every chapter to be sure I had selected appropriate photos from the enormous collection he provided.

The book would not have been possible without lots of help behind the scenes work. I am especially grateful to Laura Stenzler and Susan Danskin who took charge of fundraising and also will be handling marketing. They have been assisted by Joel Baines, Linda Clougherty, Jane Graves, Anne Hobbs, Sara Jane and Larry Hymes, Kim Kline, Bob McGuire, Ann Mitchell Betty Rowley, and Scott Sutcliff who helped solicit donations. I am sure others will pitch in when it comes time to help with sales.

Several club members helped by serving as proofreaders. Thank you Jane Graves, Anne Hobbs, John McCain, Bob McGuire, and Sandy Podulka for your attention to detail and willingness to apply your incredible writing skills. Proofreading is such a thankless task. No matter how many times text is read, there are always more mistakes to be found. All of the text was read by at least two of these proofreaders.

This project certainly has been more work than I anticipated, and I have learned so much about plants and about publishing! Thank you to everyone who offered advice, connected me to other knowledgeable individuals outside of the club, and cheered me on along the way. 🐦

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The club thanks the following sponsors and supporters who helped make the native plants book possible. (Additional sponsorships may still come in and will be acknowledged next month.) Contributors are listed in alphabetical order, as they will appear in the book.

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There's still time to donate. If you would like to contribute toward this project, your donation must be received by April 13. You can mail a contribution to the Cayuga Bird Club Treasurer, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca NY 14850, or bring it to the April club meeting.

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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 Cornell Lab of Ornithology's 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/CAYUGABIRDCUB

Temporary Newsletter Help Needed

BY ANNE MARIE JOHNSON

I will be away in May when it's time to produce the June issue of the Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter, and I am hoping to find someone to fill in. The bulk of the work needs to be done May 18–26. Access to Adobe InDesign software would be helpful (the computers in the Lab's volunteer work area have the software). I can provide a template, and I can give a short tutorial if you are unfamiliar with the software. If you would like to try your hand at editing and design, here's your chance!

If you think you can help, contact me for more information at <annemariejohnson@frontiernet.net> or at 539-9942. 🐦

Volunteers Needed for Migration Celebration

BY ANNE ROSENBERG

The theme of this year's celebration is "Celebrating Birds in Culture." It will be held at the Lab of Ornithology's Johnson Center on Saturday, May 16, from 10 A.M.–3 P.M.

Join our team of volunteers and help with a variety of activities:

- Guided bird walks
- Children's games and activities
- Interactive research exhibits
- Overall event support

Volunteers make this event possible! Help us increase public awareness about the ways birds and bird migration link us to distant places. Volunteers are needed from 9:30 A.M.–3:30 P.M. and will receive complimentary lunch and a free T-shirt.

To sign up as a volunteer, contact Anne Rosenberg at <baj3@cornell.edu> or Amy Johnson at <aj254@cornell.edu>, or call the Lab at 254-2473 by April 20. Visit our web site at <www.birds.cornell.edu/birdday> for more information. 🐦

Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
APRIL 5 Sunday 7:30 A.M.	Field Trip: Cayuga Lake Leader: Bill Baker Meet: Johnson Center far parking lot	This all day trip will travel around the lake. Dress for the weather. Bring snacks and lunch. There will be stops for food along the way. Contact Bill at <billbaker@lightlink.com> or at 275-0540 for more information.
APRIL 6 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Stan Senner	Alaska's Tongass National Forest, the nation's largest national forest and part of the largest intact temperate rainforest in the world, is home to old-growth forests, brown and black bears, Marbled and Kittlitz's murrelets, Queen Charlotte Goshawks, and all five species of Pacific salmon. It also is a place where controversy has raged for many decades about whether, where, and how much timber should be cut. In his presentation, "Big Trees, Birds, and Conservation in the Tongass Rainforest," Audubon Alaska's executive director Stan Senner will describe this unique region and Audubon's efforts to apply the best science to finding positive conservation solutions.
APRIL 13 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Charles Eldermire	The Emperor Goose is perhaps the least studied goose in North America because it remains in Alaska year-round. In his presentation, "Traveling with the Emperors: Studying Geese from the Yukon to the Aleutians," Charles will focus on the lessons he learned while studying Emperor Geese for the government during four field seasons in the Yukon Delta and one in the Aleutian Islands. See speaker profile on page 4.
APRIL 18 Saturday 7:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Derby Hill Leader: Gary Kohlenberg Meet: Johnson Center front parking lot	Join Gary for an all day trip to the Derby Hill Hawk Watch, on the southeastern corner of Lake Ontario. Bring snacks, lunch, and a lawn chair, if you have one. If it is raining, there will be a local trip. Contact Gary at <jgk25@cornell.edu> or at 342-3810 with questions.
APRIL 20 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Greg Shriver	Greg Shriver, Assistant Professor of Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, will present "Salt-marsh Sparrows."
APRIL 20 Monday	Newsletter deadline	Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
APRIL 27 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Marc Dantzker	Marc Dantzker, a Multimedia Productions Producer at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will present "Pop-Whistle-Pop: The Pumped-up Mating Displays of Greater Sage Grouse and Their Kin."
MAY 2 Saturday 7:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Dryden Lake Leader: Bard Prentiss Meet: Dryden Lake	Meet Bard near the pavilion at Dryden Lake for a morning walk around the lake in search of newly arrived migrants. Bring a snack. Dress for the weather. You can reach Bard at 844-4691 or at <prentissb@frontiernet.net> for more information.
MAY 4 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Viviana Ruiz-Gutierrez	Viviana Ruiz-Gutierrez, a Ph.D. candidate at Cornell University, will present "Conservation of Birds in the Tropics: Effects of Habitat Loss and Fragmentation on Forest Birds in Costa Rica." Her dissertation research used novel population monitoring techniques to assess the effect of land-use changes on the survival and genetic diversity of White-ruffed Manakins in southwestern Costa Rica. Viviana will present some key results from her research and talk about the probability of continued occupancy and use of forest habitat across all species in her study area.

Events Calendar continued

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
MAY 11 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: TBA	See the next Newsletter for details.
MAY 10 Saturday 10:00 A.M.– 3:00 P.M.	Migration Celebration Johnson Center	This year's theme is "Celebrating Birds in Culture." Activities will include guided bird walks, children's games and activities, and interactive research exhibits. Volunteers are needed to help with the event. See page 2 to learn more.

Record Nature's Sounds Like a Pro

Have you ever wished you could bottle the incredible wave of bird song that arrives with spring? You can! Learn how at the annual Sound Recording Workshop offered by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The next session takes place June 6–13 at San Francisco State University's Sierra Nevada Field Campus. The Sound Recording Workshop is taught by skilled recordists from the Lab's Macaulay Library. This workshop is appropriate for all who have an interest in recording wildlife sounds, whether you are a seasoned researcher or someone who has never recorded a bird before.

Through daily field recording sessions, lectures, and demonstrations, participants learn how to get the most out of their field recording equipment and take advantage of every recording opportunity. They also receive an introduction to sound analysis software that converts sound waves into visual images so they can see a bird's song, note by note.

The Sound Recording Workshop fee of \$895 covers tuition, class materials, local transportation, food, lodging, and the loan of a recording system for the course to the first six registrants who request it. A deposit is requested to reserve a space in the workshop, which is limited to 20 students. Registration and a \$100 down-payment are due by April 10.

Learn more about the workshop online at <www.macaulaylibrary.org/inside/record/workshops/index.do>. To register contact Nancy Schrempf at (607) 254-2153 or at <ns29@cornell.edu>. 🐦

April Speaker Profile:

Charles Eldermire

As manager of the Johnson Visitors' Center and the Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary, Charles Eldermire has been increasing the quantity and quality of educational opportunities and outreach activities for visitors to the Lab. In addition, Charles curates the Lab's art collection and coordinates research within Sapsucker Woods. Before joining the Lab in March 2006, he earned a masters degree from the University of Montana and spent many years working as an itinerant field biologist in the West. 🐦

Beginner Bird Walks

Come to Sapsucker Woods on Saturdays and Sundays during April for a leisurely walk through the Sanctuary to witness the new arrival of our spring birds. These walks, which are aimed at beginner bird watchers, begin at 9 A.M. and last approximately 1–1½ hours. They are led by volunteer docents.

Or stop by every Wednesday morning during April and May for a guided bird walk before heading off to work! These walks begin at 8 A.M. and last approximately one hour. They will be led by Cornell Lab of Ornithology staff and volunteers.

For all walks, meet in front of the Visitors' Center at Sapsucker Woods. Dress for the weather and bring a pair of binoculars and a field guide (if you have them). Some binoculars may be available to borrow. 🐦

FIELD TRIP REPORT: LIME HOLLOW, FEBRUARY 21

BY MATT YOUNG

Seven people joined me for a morning of birding at Lime Hollow and the surrounding area. The weather was nice, but birding was a bit slow. We covered the area from Scott, Sempronius, and Summerhill to Groton. Highlights were Common Redpolls at my house in Scott, White-winged Crossbills at Summerhill,

widespread siskins, and several flocks of Horned Larks, with one flyover Lapland Longspur in Groton that, unfortunately, was only heard by me. Additionally, we found a Purple Finch and a Song Sparrow at the Lime Hollow Nature Center feeders. 🐦

MINUTES: CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING

MARCH 9, 2009

BY SUZANNE HENDERSON

The March club meeting was called to order by president Susan Danskin. Members and guests were welcomed, and visitors were invited to introduce themselves. Gladys Birdsall was thanked for providing cookies to be enjoyed at the end of the program. Ann Mitchell and Linda Orkin volunteered to bring refreshments for the April 13 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

- Bob McGuire made a motion that the Cayuga Bird Club (CBC) become a Partner Organization to the New York State Young Birders Club (NYSYBC), committing to the support that was outlined at the February meeting and in the March newsletter and paying annual membership dues of \$50. Linda Clougherty seconded the motion. No one present expressed a need for further discussion. The motion passed unanimously.
- Matt Medler, as announced at the February meeting, volunteered to update the CBC website. Thanks to Matt's timely and talented efforts, the website has been brought up to date and made more user friendly, with interesting links and resources. Susan encouraged members to visit the website and see Matt's improvements (www.birds.cornell.edu/cayugabirdclub). If you have it bookmarked on your computer, you may need to click on the refresh button in your web browser to see the updated pages. The club is very appreciative of Matt's work.

NEW BUSINESS

Susan Danskin made an announcement that saddened many members. Synnova Sunny Gooding passed away Thursday, March 5, 2009. Sunny and her husband, David, had been active CBC members for 31 years. Many members remember birding trips with them. Sunny had been an attorney in Albany but lived in Ithaca on weekends and vacationed here. In the 1980s she assisted the club in revising the by-laws. Some knew her in the community as an active chorus member. The club will dearly miss her and extends condolences to David and her family. Laura Stenzler proposed that the club donate \$250 in her memory, to be divided evenly between two charitable organizations designated by the family: Hospicare and the Science Center of Ithaca. The motion was

seconded by Ann Mitchell. No one initiated further discussion. The motion passed unanimously. Plans are incomplete for a community celebration of her life in early July 2009.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next meeting will be Monday, April 13, 2009. Our guest speaker will be Charles Eldermire, from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. The title of his program will be "Traveling with Emperors: Working with Geese from the Yukon to the Aleutians."

RECENT SIGHTINGS AND BASIN LIST

Gladys Birdsall read the Cayuga Lake Basin bird list and recorded the birds identified in the basin in the previous week. A Golden Eagle and many hawks (especially Red-tailed) were observed during the week, as well as migrating geese and ducks (39,000 Redheads). The Montezuma Mucklands had about 170,000 Snow Geese. Also reported were two Ross's Geese, a Long-tailed Duck, and a Horned Grebe. There still were significant numbers of Pine Siskins throughout the basin, and the popular Snowy Owl continues to be observed daily at the intersection of County Road 129 and Center Road in Ovid.

EVENING PROGRAM

The audience welcomed guest speaker, Jason Townsend, a Ph.D. candidate at the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Jason educated us about the Bicknell's Thrush, a species he has been studying during summers in New Hampshire and winters in the Dominican Republic.

Bicknell's Thrush may be the only songbird endemic to northeastern North America, yet many folks are unaware of its existence. Although this species was discovered by Eugene Bicknell in 1881, it was not recognized as its own species (*Catharus bicknelli*) until 1995. This elusive thrush is closely related to the Gray-cheeked Thrush but has a different call and song, different DNA, and occupies a different breeding range. The Bicknell's Thrush nests in extremely harsh, chilly forests at elevations

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FIELD TRIP REPORT: CAYUGA LAKE, MARCH 7

BY SUSAN DANSKIN

On Saturday, March 7, I was joined by Bob McGuire, Ann Mitchell, Gary Kohlenberg, Bill Baker, Shannon Haskins, and Stewart Krasnoff (very briefly) for a trip around the lake. We started the morning at East Shore Park where, in addition to the ongoing collection of *Aythya* ducks, we were able to find 15 White-winged Scoters, 2 Long-tailed Ducks, and for many of us, first-of-the-year Wood Ducks. We also found higher numbers of Hooded Mergansers, American Wigeons, and Northern Pintails than in previous weeks.

Myers Point was lacking a large number of birds, but we did find four Horned Grebes and one Killdeer, also a first-of-the-year sighting for some. From the marina, the highlights were two Red-necked Grebes, one Long-tailed Duck, and the Common Loon with the broken mandible. We were all glad to see it had survived another winter.

We stopped along Lake Road on our way down to Long Point. The occupants of the lead car were pondering the possibility of Eastern Meadowlark, and we were not disappointed. In addition to the meadowlark, we saw three Wild Turkeys, one Red-tailed Hawk, three Horned Larks, and one Northern Mockingbird. At Long Point itself, we added ten White-winged Scoters to our count for the day.

At the Wells College Boat House in Aurora, we amused ourselves by counting Horned Grebes and Wood Ducks. The diving of the grebes made it difficult, but we managed a high count of 18. All in all we found 21 Wood Ducks, most of which were paired up.

While driving from Aurora to Union Springs, we were diverted momentarily by a collection of Snow Geese decoys set up in a field—not a Ross's Goose among them. We viewed a large raft of live Snow Geese from the bluffs near MacKenzie-Childs. Distances made it impossible to tell if there were any Ross's mixed in.

In Union Springs, the ponds were relatively empty, and at the park in Cayuga most of the birds were far out across the lake. But we were able to add one more White-winged Scoter to our day count. At Mudlock, we caught glimpses of a Bald Eagle on the nest.

The Montezuma Mucklands yielded Horned Lark, Tree Sparrows, and thousands of Snow Geese. With assistance from some birders from Cornell, we were able to pick two Ross's Geese out of all of those Snow

Geese. It was interesting to note that one individual seemed to have the perfect Ross's bill but seemed a bit large overall while the other had a slightly larger bill than expected in a Ross's but seemed to be the perfect size overall.

At Van Dyne Spoor Road, we enjoyed watching two Rough-legged Hawks over the fields. Tree Sparrows were present both there and at Armitage Road, where we found Gary his first Northern Shoveler of the year.

Pulling off to the side of Route 89 near May's Point, we picked our way through a big flock of Common Grackles, Red-winged Blackbirds, and European Starlings looking for a Rusty Blackbird, to no avail.

The highlight of our trip down the west side of the lake was the rapidly deteriorating weather conditions. At Cayuga Lake State Park, it was drizzling and getting hazy, but we were able to scan the ducks and pick out another Northern Shoveler for the day. By Dean's Cove, the fog had shrouded the lake and scanning was impossible. A stop at the Cayuga Lake Creamery more than made up for the lousy weather. 🐾

MINUTES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

of 3,000 feet and above. Jason explained the perils this thrush faces due to pollution (especially mercury), losses in nesting habitat, and perhaps more crucially, the destruction of its wintering habitat.

Bicknell's Thrush breeds in June, about two weeks later than lower elevation thrushes. The females are territorial, and they mate with more than one male. Several different males tend the nests with the females. Both males and females sing. Jason presented information about ongoing efforts to monitor and preserve these thrushes, including employing radio telemetry. The physical condition of birds leaving Hispaniola after winter and an apparently high mortality rate of females is of special concern. 🐾

HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGID

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED TO THWART NEW THREAT

BY TODD BITTNER, CORNELL PLANTATIONS NATURAL AREAS DIRECTOR

An insect pest newly arrived in the Finger Lakes region—the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid—recently was discovered in the Cornell Plantations area of Cascadilla Gorge and in the Beebe Lake natural areas. This Asian species has decimated hemlock populations across the eastern United States, where altered habitats—due to the loss of the hemlocks—have caused a cascade of environmental changes for some amphibians, fish, invertebrates, and plants in response to increased light and warmer temperatures.

The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*) causes nearly 100 percent mortality in the native Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). The small, aphid-like insect feeds on the sap at the base of individual needles on the trees; eventually needles yellow and drop, branches die, and trees succumb in about four to ten years.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgids were first reported in the central Finger Lakes region in mid-2008, and they now inhabit at least 19 local sites. Early detection of new sites of infestation is now a high priority, and local conservation groups are organizing volunteer surveys as a critical first step in managing this devastating invasive species.

For more information on the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, visit <www.plantations.cornell.edu/our-gardens/natural-areas/invasive/hemlock-woolly-adelgid>. Additional information and instructions on reporting new infestations can also be found at the New York Invasive Species Research Institute website: <www.nyisri.org/HWA.aspx>. 🐛



Mark Whitmore

An Eastern Hemlock infested with Hemlock Woolly Adelgids.

FIRST COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ABOUT U.S. BIRDS

ADAPTED FROM CORNELL LAB OF ORNITHOLOGY PRESS RELEASE

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar recently released *U.S. State of the Birds*, the first ever comprehensive report on bird populations in the United States, showing that nearly a third of the nation's bird species are endangered, threatened, or in significant decline due to habitat loss, invasive species, and other threats. At the same time, the report highlights examples where habitat restoration and conservation have reversed previous declines, offering hope that it is not too late to take action to save declining populations.

The *U.S. State of the Birds*, which synthesizes data from three long-running bird censuses, calls attention to the crisis in Hawaii, where more birds are in danger of extinction than anywhere else in the United States. In addition, the report indicates a 40

percent decline in grassland birds over the past 40 years, a 30 percent decline in birds of arid lands, and high concern for many coastal shorebirds. Furthermore, 39 percent of species dependent on U.S. oceans have declined.

However, the report also reveals convincing evidence that birds can respond quickly and positively to conservation action. The report shows dramatic increases in many wetland birds such as pelicans, herons, egrets, osprey, and ducks—a testament to numerous cooperative conservation partnerships that have resulted in protection, enhancement, and management of more than 30 million wetland acres.

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Fish Crow Mimics American Crow

BY KEVIN MCGOWAN

While my research collaborator, Anne Clark, and I were showing a visitor some of the crow families we study around Ithaca, we found a very unusual Fish Crow. We were driving on Uptown Road, just west of the intersection with Burleigh Drive, when we heard an odd crow calling. Anne told me that she had heard an odd crow call here the other day and encouraged me to listen to it. The calling crow was making a long, repeated, evenly spaced series of caws. It was something not quite like anything I had ever heard an American Crow do before. We pulled into the parking lot to listen. When I looked through binoculars at the crow calling from near the top of a bare tree, I realized it was a Fish Crow making the American Crow call! Suddenly the Fish Crow that was calling behind us made sense. It appeared to be responding to these American Crow calls.

The Birds of North America Fish Crow account (written by me) mentions the species imitating the caws of an American Crow, but that was based on a single individual I observed in Tampa, Florida, in the midst of a sea of Fish Crows. I never saw nor heard about any other observations of the behavior until now.

What I found even more interesting than the imitation, though, was the ensuing interaction with a young American Crow. While this Fish Crow was calling American Crow style, a tagged yearling crow from a nearby family flew over and landed in the same tree. I was curious to see if the Fish Crow would keep up the American Crow talk with a real American Crow present, and it did not! It switched to making Fish Crow calls and then moved to a different tree. The young American Crow followed, made an aggressive dive on the Fish Crow, and then perched nearby. The Fish Crow kept calling at a lower rate but made only appropriate Fish Crow calls the rest of the time we were there.

It is nearly impossible not to anthropomorphize this incident. It looked for the world like the Fish Crow was talking big jive or hip-hop, and the real thing showed up saying, "Whatchu talkin' bout Fishy?"

"Oh, nothing, sir, I was just sitting here talking regular Fish Crow."



Fish Crow at Stewart, March 2003.

Kevin McGowan

"Dude, you better keep it that way!"

I made video and sound recordings of this crow and put them at <picasaweb.google.com/KevinJ.McGowan/CrowThings2009>. I have been studying American Crows for 21 years and Fish Crows for 23, and I still make observations that are full of novelty and surprises. Ya just gotta love it! 🐦

FIRST COMPREHENSIVE REPORT ABOUT U.S. BIRDS

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The United States is home to a tremendous diversity of native birds, with more than 800 species inhabiting terrestrial, coastal, and ocean habitats, including Hawaii. Among these species, 67 are federally listed as endangered or threatened. In addition, more than 184 species are designated as species of conservation concern due to small distribution, high level of threats, or declining populations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service coordinated creation of the new report as part of the U.S. North

American Bird Conservation Initiative, which includes partners from American Bird Conservancy, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Klamath Bird Observatory, National Audubon Society, The Nature Conservancy, and the U.S. Geological Survey.

The report, as well as more information about the research behind it, is available online at <www.stateofthebirds.org>. 🐦



Native Plants for Native Birds: *Viburnum acerifolium* (Mapleleaf Viburnum)

BY JOEL BAINES, PHOTOS BY DAVID RUPPERT

Few plants in any landscape tolerate the combination of dry soil and full shade. We are fortunate to have a plant native to our area that not only tolerates this combination but also is loved by birds. Mapleleaf Viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*) is a low-growing (4 feet or so) colony former that thrives on the rims and



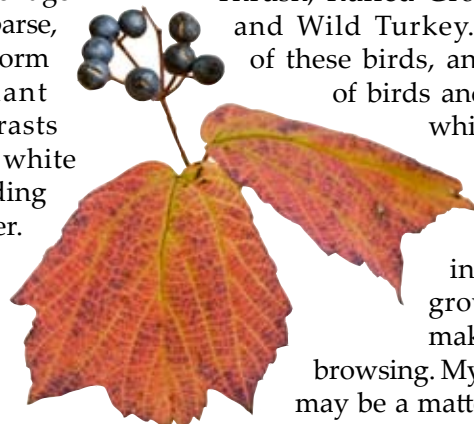
steep sides of gorges and other very well drained sites. The leaves resemble those of maple, with three lobes to each leaflet, and each leaflet is arranged oppositely as pairs along the stem. Its foliage is rather sparse, with the form of the plant decidedly rounded. The foliage contrasts nicely with the three-inch clusters of white flowers that appear in mid spring, leading to black fruit that will persist into winter. Autumn color varies but is usually a deep burgundy or purple.

Although Mapleleaf Viburnum will tolerate sun, it thrives in the cool of full or partial shade. Growth is relatively slow, usually less than 12 inches a year, but the plant tolerates a variety of soil types and does well in most Ithaca soils. Mapleleaf Viburnum is a very

important component of the native understory, which is increasingly rare in our densely shaded woodlands. This layer of vegetation provides important cover for woodland birds that spend most of their time near the ground, such as Ovenbird, Hermit Thrush, Wood Thrush, Ruffed Grouse, and Wild Turkey. All



Mapleleaf Viburnum seedlings next to Red Maple leaf (top left)



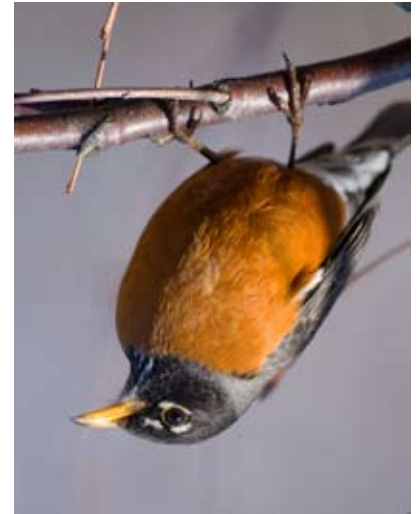
of these birds, and dozens of other species of birds and mammals, love the fruit, which can be abundant even in full shade.

Mapleleaf Viburnum is surprisingly common in our area despite its low-growing habit, which should make it very vulnerable to deer browsing. My theory is that the resistance may be a matter of location because even the deer candy known as Eastern Hemlock remains standing and relatively undisturbed on some gorge slopes and rims, suggesting that deer simply do not spend much time eating at these locations. The persistence of the plant in the natural landscape also suggests that it is resistant to the Viburnum Leaf Beetle. Although it is listed as susceptible, I have noted little damage in specimens of Mapleleaf Viburnum literally across the driveway from a completely skeletonized American Cranberrybush (*Viburnum trilobum*).

Although it will always appear a bit informal given its loose habit, Mapleleaf Viburnum is virtually the only native plant that can grow well as an understory species in full, dry shade. It is therefore indispensable in certain niches or garden situations, such as under trees or taller viburnums on upland sites. Here, the plant adds both cover and food for birds where no other native can. 🐦



American Robin in Sapsucker Woods, March 22, 2009.



Ryan Douglas

CAYUGA BIRD CLUB
c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology
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Ithaca, NY 14850



Emperor Goose, Charles Eldermire

NEXT MEETING APRIL 13

CHARLES ELDERMIRE
FEATURED SPEAKER

“TRAVELING WITH THE EMPERORS: STUDYING
GEESE FROM THE YUKON TO THE ALEUTIANS”

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VIBURNUM)