



Cayuga Bird Club

Newsletter

December 2001

President's Message

Greetings! First of all I would like to thank everyone who worked hard planning the Christmas Count, trips, and meetings etc. in my absence.

The last two months I have been traveling in Japan, Thailand, and India attending conferences, **birdwatching**, and visiting friends.

In Japan, I spent a week in Hokkaido from 19-25 Oct, where my main aim was to look for Thanchos (Japanese Cranes) and O-washi, Steller's Sea Eagles (220-245 cm wingspan, the largest eagles of the Northern Hemisphere). I was very lucky to see them both at Tofutsu-Ko (Ko = Lake) on the northeastern coast of Hokkaido along the Okhotsk Sea. I got off at Gensei Kaen, a tiny station on the wind-swept seacoast. The Ko reminded me so much of the shores of Cayuga or Ontario on a mid-winter morning. I had to hold on to my scope all the time, or it could easily have blown away. Tofutsu-Ko was filled with thousands of Eurasian Widgeons, Pintails, Tufted ducks, and Whooper swans. On the far shore, as I was watching three Thanchos feeding at the edge of the lake, a large eagle came soaring into the view of my scope. It turned out to be an immature Steller's Eagle! I was thrilled watching it. These birds breed in Russia and arrive in Hokkaido for the winter, usually by late November. I was happy to see even an immature in October. My luck was still on; further along the shore, I came upon three more Steller's, two adults and one immature. Through the scope they looked like giants. The adults have a massive, almost 4-inch-long bill and beautiful

black and white plumage. One of the adults took off and flew across the dark gray sky and dark brown leafless plants. That sight is unforgettable. As a bonus I also saw a large flock of Smews in non-breeding plumage (which I realized only later; my only mental picture was of male breeding plumaged Smew). They look very much like grebes and behave like them, too. Also there were hundreds of Black-headed, Slaty-backed, and Glaucous Gulls along the shore of Okhotsk, and White-winged and Black Scoters floating effortlessly on the rough sea. I thought it would be an ideal place for CBC field trip.

In Thailand I visited the Mae Wong National Park, where I watched a flock of 30 Great Indian and a pair of Rufous-necked Hornbills fly back and forth over the valley across two mountains. In Corbett National Park in India, the highlights were, of course, two majestic tigers and thousands of Indian White-eyes. In the Jhirna area, they literally spooked out from anywhere and everywhere like locusts on migration. I must have seen nearly 400 species of birds on this trip.

But in spite of that, whenever I got the chance, I looked at Cayugabirds on the web and felt that I was missing Crossbills, Scoters, loons, etc. If you too missed them or even otherwise, join Matts' trip to Summer Hill. We also have a Niagara trip coming up this month. Hope to see you all on some of these trips.

Meena

Club Officers

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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

, 159

, 14850.

Website: <<http://birds.cornell.edu/cayugabirdclub/>>

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

IBAs in Action: An Update on New York State's Important Bird Area Program

December Program Presentation

By

Jillian Butler, Audubon New York IBA Program Coordinator

Abstract: In 1996, the Important Bird Area (IBA) Program of Audubon New York, in cooperation with a host of partners, identified 127 critical bird breeding, migratory stop-over, feeding, and over-wintering areas in the state. Important Bird Areas vary in size and are found in all types of habitats, including forests, shrub/scrub, grasslands, freshwater and saltwater wetlands, and bodies of water. Over the past few years, Audubon New York has been engaged in many efforts aimed at achieving conservation successes at IBAs. These efforts include several types of conservation actions, conservation planning, bird monitoring, and education and outreach. The talk will update folks on the conservation activities that have taken place at IBAs in New York and where the program looks to go in the future.

Biography: Jillian Butler joined Audubon New York as their Important Bird Area (IBA) Program Coordinator this past summer. She holds a Bachelor's degree in biology from Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, and a Master's degree in Ecological Planning from the University of Vermont. She was introduced to the Important Bird Area Program while assisting on the development of a conservation plan for an IBA in Vermont, the Berlin Pond Watershed. It was there she saw how effective the IBA program can be in protecting areas not only for birds but also other wildlife, plants, and people.



Last Issue of the CBC Newsletter

For those who have failed to renew their membership

Please

Send a check for \$10 to: Cayuga Bird Club, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Rd., Ithaca, NY 14850

Or

See our treasurer, Kim Kline, at the meeting on Monday, December 10. She will be happy to receive your dues at that time.

Notices and Information of Special Interest

NY Christmas Birds Counts

Submitted by Matt Williams

With the help of many of you, I've been assembling a schedule that lists most of the NY Christmas Bird Counts along with compiler contact information. The most current listing can be found on the web at: <http://www.people.cornell.edu/pages/mjw22/nycbc.html>

Please contact me at mjw22@cornell.edu if you have any additional information or corrections to this list. There are still quite a few counts that haven't been confirmed for 2001 and 9 counts that are supposedly active, but I have no information on dates, etc.

I hope that all of you have the opportunity to participate in one (or many) of these counts taking place between Dec. 14th and Jan. 5th this year. With the finches and other interesting species seen already this fall, the counts are bound to be interesting.

I'd also like to thank Barbara Butler of the Federation of NYS Bird Clubs for her help in updating this list for 2001.

2002 Federation of New York State Bird

Club's Waterfowl Count

Submitted by Gladys Birdsall

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs' annual midwinter waterfowl count is scheduled for January 12 through 20, 2002. Each January, members visit lakes, rivers, and shorelines to count waterfowl (geese, ducks, swans, loons, grebes, etc.) The waterfowl count, in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Conservation, helps monitor long term population trends in the Atlantic flyway.

For people who wish to help out with the count in the Cayuga Lake Basin Area, the contact person is Scott Sutcliffe. The count for the Cayuga Lake Basin Area will be Saturday, January 19th, 2002. Participants will begin at 7:00 a.m. and finish when the waterfowl is counted. Scott Sutcliffe can be reached at his office (254-2424), at home (387-9247) or by e-mail, (sas10@cornell.edu)

Looking out for marked birds

Submitted by Gladys Birdsall

The following information is provided for New York birders who may encounter marked hawks. It is taken from the September 2001 issue of *Winging It*, the newsletter of the American Birding Association.

Roving Raptors

Researchers in Pennsylvania are seeking any reports of Red-tailed Hawks color-marked this summer as part of a study of the movements of this species. Hawks were marked with green, yellow, or pink dyes on their outermost secondary feathers; the birds could turn up almost anywhere through the spring of 2002. Ninety hawks marked in this manner during the summer of 2000, the first year of the study, produced sixteen confirmed sightings through April of this year, as far south as Virginia (last fall) and as far north as Canada (during spring migration), according to the study's organizers.

If you spot a hawk with the markings

described, you can assist the project by reporting the date, time of day, and location of the sighting; the age of the bird (adult or immature); the color of the dye; and the behavior of the bird (e.g., migrating north or south, hunting, perching, or nesting).

Submit the information along with your name and contact information to:

Wildlife Information Center
PO Box 198
Slatington, PA 18080
phone/fax (610) 760-8889
wildlife@fast.net

Eastern Tundra Swan Project

The Atlantic Flyway is involved in a movement study of eastern tundra swans. During the winters of 2000-01 and 2001-02, biologists in Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Virginia are putting radio transmitters and satellite transmitters on eastern tundra swans. These transmitters are attached to white neck collars. If any of these transmitters are found or reported to you, would you please contact:

Khristi Wilkins or Rich Malecki
NY Cooperative Fish & Wildlife Research Unit
Fernow Hall, Room 202
Cornell University
Ithaca, NY 14853-0188
607-255-2836
kaw47@cornell.edu or
ram26@cornell.edu

As a part of this study, gray neck collars with black lettering (no transmitters) have been placed on birds in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. If you see any of these neck collars, please forward all verified sightings to the state biologist.

These contacts are:

Delaware Tom Whittendale 302-653-2882 twhittendal@state.de.us

Maryland Larry Hindman 410-827-8612 lhindman@dnr.state.md.us

North Carolina Dennis Luszczyk 252-482-7787 luszczydc@datalinkc.com

Pennsylvania John Dunn 717-776-7337 jpdunn@epix.net

Virginia Gary Costanzo 757-253-4180 gcostanzo@dgif.state.va.us

Finchoids Are on the Move!

As many of you know, and some of you probably don't, finches to me are what make winter birding the best. Yes, you have your spring migration with all those crown jewels making their way from the south, but it's usually too predictable for me. Now, don't get me wrong, I love those amazingly colorful warblers, vireos, and swallows of spring. But, it's the unpredictable, social, and energetic finches of the north that get me really excited about birding. And, for the most part, many other people share a similar love of feeding these finches that arrive from the north.

Well, this year is looking better and better for those of you that would like to see these northern specialties at your backyard feeders. Each day there are increasing reports of Pine Siskins, Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, White-winged and Red Crossbills, and Common Redpolls heading our way. Rare Bird Alerts from all over the Northeast are being dominated by finch reports. Furthermore, reports are not only numerous, but are early. For example, Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins are already being reported from as far south as the Carolinas, Common Redpolls are already in Delaware, and White-winged and Red Crossbills are in Pennsylvania. Lastly, Pine Grosbeaks, usually our rarest basin finch, are being reported from states throughout the Northeast. We can only hope that Pine Grosbeaks make it to a location near us. The last time Pine Grosbeaks were reported in the Cayuga Lake Basin was during the "superflight" invasion winter of 1997-98 when all the finches were seen in our area. This year might not shape up to be a superflight year (a year when all the finches move in mass), but it certainly seems like it could be close. Oh, getting back to the last Pine Grosbeak report; they were last seen in the basin at Summer Hill .

Well, when I was asked to write this article I figured I might as well take a trip to

Summer Hill to see what finches were flying about. On Friday November 2nd Summer Hill turned out to be magical once again. We didn't arrive until nearly 10:30am. We walked part of Salt Road where we had a few flyover Evening Grosbeaks. Then we headed off to the feeders at the log cabin house along Fillmore Lane. Here, while Julie and I visited with friends, we had a flock of 20+ Evening Grosbeaks at their feeders. We also had a flyover Pine Siskin. After a good ninety minutes of visiting, we decided we should check the feeders and spruces along Lake Como Road. This is where I came across the most diverse finch flock I've ever come across. At one of the houses along Lake Como Road we observed a very loose flock of 22 Pine Siskins, 10 American Goldfinches, 2 House Finches, 5 Evening Grosbeaks, 4 White-winged Crossbills, and 1 Red Crossbill! It was a pure delight. The birds were feeding at both the feeders and the spruces in the yard. So, as you can see, these birds are on their way and many are in the area. Keep those feeders full, and maybe you too will get to see these wonderful treasures from the north

Happy winter finching,
Matt Young

Minutes of the Cayuga Bird Club

November 12, 2001

Submitted by Linda Clougherty

Laura Stenzler called the meeting to order. New members were welcomed and asked to introduce themselves. Laura reminded the audience that membership to the club is \$10 a year and is due in September. Recent sightings and comments were exchanged: Coopers hawk was seen chasing a pileated woodpecker; a red-headed woodpecker was reported near Gully Rd, first road north of Aurora; pine siskins, grosbeaks, turkeys, many winter finch species being seen.

Announcements:

Matt Wasson, speaker at a CBC meeting last year, will give a lecture on tree swallows and calcium on November 19, in Corson/Mudd Hall.

The talk was by Jan Komdeur from the Zoological Lab of Animal Ecology, Univ. of Groningen, Netherlands. The title of his talk is "Flexible life histories of the Seychelles warbler," on November 28, in Corson/Mudd Hall.

Montezuma NWR is holding a sale and birdseed workshop during the last week of November and first weekend of December. Call 315-568-5987 for details.

The Christmas Bird Count is coming up January 1, 2002. Watch the newsletter for details.

Field trips:

The trip to Summerhill on November 10, was a success.

November 17 - Loon Watch at Taughannock Park, North Point, 7-9:30 AM, led by Bob Mead and John Confer. To date about 6000 loons have been counted.

December 2 – Summerhill for Finches, meet at 7:15 at the Lab of O, led by Matt Young.

December 8-9 – Trip to Niagara Falls, led by Kevin McGowan. Call Gladys Birdsall by 11/30 to reserve a space. Will stay at a bed & breakfast in Niagara on the Lake. Members of the Eaton Bird Society will join the CBC for this trip.

Kevin McGowan read the Basin list.

Dr. Eduardo E. Iñigo-Elias, Cornell University. "Macaws Without Borders: biology and conservation lessons on the Scarlet Macaw in the Selva Maya."

Members enjoyed refreshments at the conclusion of the program.

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