



Cayuga Bird Club

Newsletter

March 1999

President's Message

Good Birding!

Gladys

Club Officers

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The Cayuga Bird Club

The Cayuga Bird Club meets at 7:30 pm at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology 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 Sap

14850.

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

Wildfowl Carving

A talk by Roger Westgate, New York State's Wildfowl Carver of 1994

In Brief

Candor wood carver Roger Westgate will bring samples of his work, the tools-of-the-trade, and reference materials. He will share his wildfowl carving experiences and will provide a hands-on demonstration if time allows.

Background

Long-time Candor resident and IBM employee, Roger Westgate has been a bird carver since 1980. Before that, he spent years as a decorative carver, carving such items as restored antique drawer pulls, chair backs, and creations of his own imagining, which he would give away or sell for a pittance.

A friend who belonged to Ducks Unlimited came to him one day and challenged Roger to do some duck carvings: "I'll give you \$200 for each duck you carve." Roger started to research ducks for those carvings, immersing himself in bird studies—he read books, pored over photos and slides, and observed ducks in the field. That was nearly twenty years ago, and Roger says the most interesting part of his bird carving is still the research.

When he decides to carve a species of bird, he'll study its typical poses, foraging habits, behaviors, and habitat. For competitions, he'll choose a bird's signature pose. For example, since a Spotted Sandpiper typically bobs its tail up and down, he'll carve the bird with its tail up, indicating that movement.

Roger got his earliest inspiration to carve when he was a student at SUNY Oswego. He remembers being awed by a big hand-carved grandfather clock that sat outside of one of his professor's classrooms. Prior to taking up carving, though, he served in the U. S. Navy during the Korean War on a destroyer anti-submarine escort. He was stationed in the Caribbean; Newport, Rhode Island; and Key West, Florida.

He returned to Candor to raise three boys and work with IBM, retiring as Employee Relations Manager at IBM Owego in 1987. Finally, he was able to devote much more of his time to wood carving. In addition to bird carving, he carves specialty signs and figurines, such as storybook characters. But wildfowl carving is his primary focus. Roger has won a number of wildfowl carving competitions and was named New York State's Wildfowl Carver of the Year for 1994.

Coming soon . . . Cayuga Bird Club Meetings, Field Trips, and *Lab of Ornithology Monday Night Seminars . . .*

- Sunday** **Field Trip to LARCH MEADOWS, Buttermilk Falls, led by Martha**
March 7 **Fischer and Annette Finney.** **Meet at the playing field on Sandbank Rd. at 8:00 a.m. for this 1/2 day trip. Call Martha if you need to be picked up at the Cornell Dairy Bar, or if you have any questions.
- Monday** **CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING** Lab of O, Fuertes Room at 7:30 p.m.
March 8 **Roger Westgate**, New York State's Wildfowl Carver of 1994, will share his wildfowl carving experiences. He'll bring samples of his work, tools-of-the-trade, and reference materials and will do a hands-on demonstration if time allows.
- Saturday** **Field Trip CAYUGA LAKE BASIN led by Tom Nix**
March 13 Join Tom for a FULL DAY investigation of who and what is around in the Basin. Tom always has a way of turning up those rarities. **Meet at the Lab of Ornithology at 8:00 a.m. Bring lunch, back by 4 p.m. Call Tom at 273-1754 if you have questions.
- Saturday** **Field Trip for Waterfowl, led by John Confer.**
March 20 **Meet at the FLAGPOLE on the ITHACA COLLEGE CAMPUS (near the center of campus) at 7:30 a.m. for this full day trip during the peak time of waterfowl migration. Bring lunch, back by around 4:30. Call John at 539-6308 if you have any questions. Parking on the Ithaca College campus is free on the weekends and plentiful.
- Sunday** **Field trip for Owls, led by Matt Young**
March 21 **Meet at the Lab of O at 5:45 p.m. for an owling trip round the southern basin, going on to 9 or 10 p.m. Matt adds, "Leave when you want! [The second to last week in February] I had 5 species of Owls and thought it might be fun." Call Matt at 257-9721, if you have any questions.
- Monday** **Monday Night Seminar, Lab of Ornithology** Fuertes Room 7:30 p.m.
March 29 "African Elephants: Their Lives and These Times" **Katy Payne**, Cornell Lab of Ornithology. *In an illustrated talk, Katy will summarize her team's studies of the acoustic behavior of elephants. She will also read from her new book, Silent Thunder: In the Presence of Elephants, which will be available for sale and signing after the lecture.*
- Monday** **Monday Night Seminar, Lab of Ornithology** Fuertes Room 7:30 p.m.
April 5 "Effects of Habitat Fragmentation on the Population Dynamics of Songbirds," **Therese Donovan**, Environmental Science and Forestry, SUNY, Syracuse. *Is habitat fragmentation contributing to the decline of some species of Neotropical migratory birds? Find out what is known and whether fragmentation in North America can be linked to Wood Thrush population trends.*

Cayuga Bird Club Meetings, Field Trips (continued)

- Saturday
April 10** **Field Trip to the Finger Lakes Land Trust's Whitlock Preserve in Romulus, New York, led by Anne Kendall**
**Meet at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 7:00 a.m., and we will bird our way to the Cayuga Ridge Winery, where we will join Betsy Darlington of the FLLT, who will be our co-leader for the day. From there we will head to the Preserve. Bring lunch and drinks, and we will return to the Lab of O by 1:00 p.m. You can email Anne at ak53@cornell.edu if you have questions.
- Monday
April 12** **Cayuga Bird Club**
"Lessons in Warbler ID: Spring '99"
Join fellow birders for tips on identifying returning warblers. See slides and skins and hear top secrets.
- Sunday
April 18** **Field Trip for Early Migrants, led by Meena Haribal**
**Meet at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 8:00 a.m. or at the Cornell Dairy Bar at 8:15. Bring lunch, this will be an all day trip, including an owl prowl at dusk. Call Meena at 277-3536, or email her at mmh3@cornell.edu if you have questions.

Stamp Donations Benefit Bird Rehabilitation

The Florida Audubon Society's Center for Birds of Prey rehabilitates birds for release back into the wild. One fund-raising method they use is to collect cancelled postage stamps, which they sell to philatelists. Simply cut off any commemorative size stamps from your mail (don't try to remove them from the paper, and be careful not to cut so closely that you clip into the stamps or the perforation). Just keep a large pre-addressed envelope on your desk and drop into it the stamps from each day's mail and send it off when it gets full—couldn't be easier, and it's a great way to help birds, and make use of all those designs the Post Office keeps issuing! The stamps can be sent to: Marijane Caslake, Florida Audubon Society, 1331 Palmetto Avenue, Suite 110, Winter Park, Florida, 32789. All proceeds from their sale benefit the bald eagle rehabilitation program. To date, they have rehabilitated and released 202 eagles back to the wild after care at the Center.

LISTBITS

Crows Galore in Auburn

There was an interesting exchange awhile back about the huge roost of crows in Auburn, and crow expert Kevin McGown had a number of interesting bits to offer:

“Crows have been roosting in urban areas, sometimes in HUGE numbers, only in the last few decades. Auburn has a pretty good-sized roost. I was up there [recently] with the National Geographic and Inside Edition crews, and can say that it is truly impressive. Because the roost is rather spread out over the downtown area, it is very difficult to get accurate estimates of the numbers. I figure that somewhere between 25,000 and 75,000 crows are roosting in downtown Auburn. One tree alone held 3,000 sleeping crows!

“If you never have seen a spectacle like this, I encourage you to go to Auburn some night and experience it first hand. The crows begin to gather in Fort Hill Cemetery (the highest point of land around) mid- to late afternoon (about 3:30). As dusk approaches more and more crows stream in from different directions (obviously from other staging grounds out of town).

“Finally, just at dark the crows leave the cemetery in huge groups and settle into trees around town, especially near the penitentiary and along the stream going through town. We had breathtaking views from the top of the City Building, but anywhere in the downtown area should provide an exciting view.

“If you go up, stop off at Curly’s restaurant on State Street by the prison. They have good food and good beer on tap. Tell them you came up specially to see the crows. They might even give you a coupon good for a car wash (you might need it!). If you go to see the show, wherever you spend money in Auburn tell them you came to see the crows.

For directions and more information, check out the website at:

<<http://com-site.com/savethecrows/>>

“Most people think of “The Birds” when they see all the crows. I would like to replace that allusion with another. I would like to get more people thinking about how this is just the tiniest taste of what Passenger Pigeon flocks would have been like.”

Karl David chivied Kevin a bit about that last statement, saying, “So, Kevin, you really think crows might taste as good as Passenger Pigeons were reputed to taste?”

Kevin answered: “Sure. I have always been interested in how crows taste for a couple of reasons. One is because of the old adage, “to eat crow,” meaning to do something distasteful (like admit being wrong), which suggests that crows taste bad. Also, I have seen two references to the edibility of crows in the technical ornithological literature, and they are widely divergent. One says that they are foul (not fowl, Karl) and not worth eating. Another says they taste just fine, as good as any other dark-meated bird.

“I have had several opportunities to sample the flesh of crows (I will not go into detail about how this came about, but remember this is a legally hunted species). In my opinion, crow tastes just fine. It is similar to wild duck or any other wild bird with very dark meat. Crows have no white meat on them, as is true for most wild birds. (Whenever someone says something “tastes like chicken,” remember that they’re talking about the DARK meat of chicken, not the white.) The meat of most wild birds is even darker than the dark meat of chicken, and will have a gamey smell and flavor to a varying extent.”

Minutes of the Cayuga Bird Club, February 8, 1999

Submitted by Anne Kendall Casella

Gladys greeted the large crowd and asked for recent sightings. A lot of robins have been around, and there have been Snow Buntings in Dryden. An Oldsquaw continues at Hog Hole. Gladys reported that the trip to Amherst Island the previous weekend resulted in two Saw-whet Owls, a Great Horned Owl, and a Northern Shrike, but no Snowy Owls.

Stefan Hames reported that the DEC is interested in improving their raptor database. They are funding a raptor survey using a Breeding Bird Atlas methodology of driving roads, stopping at defined points, and using tape playbacks. The census will take place between April 9-14, and volunteers are needed to assist with this effort.

Gladys noted that the Osprey platforms that the club voted to erect will be mounted at Dryden Lake and Hog Hole on Feb. 27 and March 13, respectively. Dryden Agway has donated the wood for the one in Dryden and will provide other supplies at cost.

May 7, 10, and 11 are 4-H Environmental Appreciation Days. 4-H is looking for volunteers to do presentations to 4th, 5th, and 6th graders. Call Cornell Cooperative Extension to volunteer.

Laura Stenzler moved and Linda Clougherty seconded that the club should give an annual donation of \$100 to the Finger Lakes Land Trust to recognize their contributions to habitat conservation. Club members unanimously supported this donation.

Gladys reported that an anonymous individual would like to donate \$100 to the club to donate to the Double B Hunt Club to support management of grassland habitats. The Double B Hunt Club lands include the fields between Caswell Road and Wood Road in Etna that have hosted Henslow's Sparrows and Upland Sandpipers. Club members expressed reservations. Questions were raised about when these fields are mowed and whether birders can have access to the land. Chris Tessaglia-Hymes noted that he has been warned not to set foot on the property in the past even though he was in the road. He also stated that the land is actually owned by Rocco Lucente and leased by the Hunt Club. He suggested contacting Jeff and Allison Wells who know Rocco Lucente and might know more about the property. Club members agreed more information is needed.

Anne Kendall Casella informed members about the NESTS project that might result in recommendations to build a north-south connector between Rtes 34 and 79. Among the current proposals are a road through Monkey Run. A public meeting will be held at Dewitt Middle School on Feb. 25, and concerned members were urged to attend. Laura Stenzler requested that the club develop a written statement detailing our concerns.

Socheata Lor presented her very interesting thesis work on the distribution and breeding biology of Least Bittern, American Bittern, Sora, Virginia Rail, and Pied-billed Grebes at Iroquois NWR. The number of Least Bittern nests she found was especially impressive.

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

**Agenda: March meeting of the CBC
Monday, 3/8/99**

7:30 p.m. Business meeting

- a) Special bird sightings/stories
- b) Announcements from the floor
- c) Business
 - NESTS discussion/update
 - Other issues
- d) Reading of the Basin List: Matt Medler

8:15 p.m. Program

Roger Westgate, award-winning carver, will share his wild fowl carving experiences. He will bring samples of his work, tools-of-the-trade and reference materials. He will do a hands-on demonstration if time permits.
(See page 3 for further details)

Refreshments after the talk.