



Cayuga Bird Club

NEWSLETTER

ESTABLISHED 1914

MARCH 2007

2007 CAYUGA LAKE WATERFOWL SURVEY

BY SCOTT SUTCLIFFE AND LAURA STENZLER

The 2007 Cayuga Lake Waterfowl Survey took place on January 20. The survey is conducted each year in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and it covers Cayuga Lake and the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Scott Sutcliffe coordinated the count again this year, as he has for many years. Several volunteers helped with the

count: Bill McAneny, Jesse Miller, Bob Meade, Barbara LeGendre, Scott and Sally Sutcliffe, Tim Lenz, Chris Wood, Kevin and Jay McGowan, Ken Rosenberg, and Jeff Gerbracht.

The grand total of birds counted was 48,170. Total counts for each species were as follows:

Common Loon	2	Mallard	2,938	Scaup sp.	10
Pied-billed Grebe	7	Mallard X Black	3	Ring-necked Duck	344
Horned Grebe	2	Northern Pintail	1	Common Goldeneye	585
Canada Goose	38,106	Gadwall	52	Bufflehead	84
Cackling Goose	1	American Wigeon	14	Common merganser	72
Snow Goose	2,006	Redhead	794	Red-breasted merganser	12
Tundra Swan	540	Canvasback	1,520	Hooded Merganser	5
Wood Duck	1	Greater Scaup	8	Ruddy Duck	20
Black Duck	895	Lesser Scaup	90	American Coot	58

Recalling the Passenger Pigeon

BY BARBARA BAROL

Except for its blue-gray color the Passenger Pigeon, with a long and pointed tail, looked like a large Mourning Dove. *Ectopistes migratorius* is now extinct, but accounts tell of great flocks arriving annually to upstate New York in late March or early April. A seventeenth century report of a trip to Iroquoia on behalf of New York's colonial governor and legislature recounts observations of Cayuga chiefs out hunting young Passenger Pigeons on about April 30, 1699.

Jah'gowah, or Big Breads, is the name for Passenger Pigeon in the Iroquois language. Big Breads provided the Native Americans with a welcome feast at winter's end, as well as squabs, smoked and dried, to take home for future use.

Adult Passenger Pigeons liked to visit the salt springs north of Cayuga Lake near Montezuma. Cayuga hunters waited for them there. French Jesuit Father Peter Raffeix wrote in 1670, "I saw by the side of a river, within a very limited space, eight or ten fine salt springs. Many snares are set there for catching pigeons, from seven to eight hundred being often taken at one time." Native



Passenger Pigeons by John J. Audubon

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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/year, 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 duck silhouette and illustration for native plants column by Lena Samsonenko.

Visit the Cayuga Bird Club website at:

WWW.BIRDS.CORNELL.EDU/CAYUGABIRDCLUB

From the President

Brrrr..... For not having much of a winter in December and a portion of January, Mother Nature certainly has made up for lost time. Or perhaps I am particularly sensitive to the weather because I have just been to West Africa (Mali, Senegal, and The Gambia), where the temperatures hovered around 85-90 degrees. Yes, I know; I do not have anyone's sympathy.

To summarize my trip, I was overwhelmed by Africa. The vastness of its untouched land and corresponding beauty was breathtaking. Yet mixed with this beauty, I saw an incredible depth of poverty and suffering for many people. I had seen and read about such poverty in the media, but until one can see, smell, and touch the poverty in person, it is just too much to understand. We take so much for granted in this country.

The birding in Africa was too good to be true! I found The Gambia and Senegal to have the best birding areas because of their diverse environments, from marsh lands and jungles to plains and deserts. I was quite surprised to see many species that we see here, such as Ruddy Turnstones, oystercatchers, Ospreys, and Caspian Terns. Of course, I also saw many Old World species. There were too many exciting birds for me to describe, but my favorites were Beautiful Sunbirds, Lilac-breasted Rollers, and Egyptian Plovers. I was very surprised at how knowledgeable many of the people were about their local birds. In total, I found 110 life birds, which I am very proud of, considering this trip was not meant as a birding trip.

Shifting gears, at our last meeting I asked if anyone was interested in developing new projects for this year. There were some good suggestions, some of which I would like to share with you.

- New member Christianne White knows a fourth grade teacher in Groton who is instructing her class in bird identification. This teacher would like support in furthering the project and has requested bird guides, small binoculars, and advice on landscaping for birds. She especially would appreciate guests who would speak to her class about birds or accompany the children on walks through the school grounds.
- Christianne also suggested that the Ithaca Children's Garden, where the famous turtle is located, might be a good location for a project.
- Another new member is interested in helping to establish a kiosk at Stewart Park, similar to the one we erected at Myers Point.

These are all good ideas, ones I hope we can support, for projects such as these are the "life blood" of any club. New ideas create new interests for our membership; new ideas keep us working, thus involved as a group; and new ideas remind us of our ongoing responsibility to our community. I hope that some of you will contact us and help in one of these projects.

Deirdre

Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
MAR. 5 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Charles Walcott	Charles Walcott, from Cornell University, will present, "Territoriality in Common Loons: Behavior, Vocalizations and Fatal Fighting." Breeding loons defend their territory against intruders. These battles are sometimes fatal for males but not for females. Individual males have characteristic yodels, which are constant from year to year but change when the male changes territory. This lecture will explore the reasons behind these curious findings.
MAR. 10 Saturday 7:30 A.M.	Field Trip: Cayuga Lake Leader: Asher Hockett Meet: Johnson Center*	Asher will lead an all day trip around Cayuga Lake. Dress warmly and bring lunch and snacks. Contact Asher with questions at <asherhocket@hotmail.com> or at 592-4475.
MAR. 12 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Rachel Vallender	"Golden-winged Warbler's History, Hybridization, and Conservation." See speaker profile on page 4 for more information.
MAR. 19 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: John Faaborg	John Faaborg, from the University of Missouri, will present, "Lessons from my Long-Term Bird Monitoring: Good News and Bad." The perception of long-term declines among Neotropical migrant birds led to such conservation efforts as Partners in Flight, yet there has been little discussion about population trends since the early 1990s. In this lecture John will present some patterns from personal long-term monitoring studies, including 35 years from Puerto Rico, and he will discuss what the studies may suggest about current and future trends in bird populations.
MAR. 19 Monday	Newsletter deadline	Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
MAR. 24 Saturday 7:00 A.M.– noon	Field Trip: Summerhill Leader: Steve Fast Meet: Johnson Center*	Steve will lead a half day exploratory trip to Summerhill searching for winter finches and other birds. Dress for the weather and wear boots. There may be a diner stop. Contact Steve at 539-6967 or at <sfast@usadatanet.net> with questions.
MAR. 26 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Karel Anton Schat	Karel Anton Schat, from Cornell University, will present, "Bird Flu, Birds, and Birders—What is it All About?" Bird flu has been a hot topic in the press, and many questions are being asked by birders and non-birders alike. In this seminar Karel will present information on flu viruses and pandemics. He also will discuss the possible routes of virus introductions as well as the consequences if a flu virus were to infect our wild birds.
APR. 2 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: John Robinson	John Robinson, from Wildlife Conservation Society, will present, "The Biological Limits of Sustainable Hunting in the Tropics." People have harvested wildlife in tropical forests for thousands of years. In this talk John explores the biological limits of sustainable hunting and examines changes in recent years brought about by increased access to forest areas, changes in hunting practices, increased commercialization of the wild meat trade, and increased demand for bush meat.
APR. 7 Saturday 7:00 A.M.– noon	Field Trip: Early migrants Leader: Linda Clougherty Meet: Johnson Center*	Join Linda for this half day trip searching for early migrants. Contact Linda at <lindaclougherty@yahoo.com> or at 539-7546 with questions.

*Meet for field trips in the front parking lot.


Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
APR. 9 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Dan Lebbin	Dan Lebbin, Ph.D. candidate at Cornell University, will present, "Habitat Specialization among South American Birds." Dan will introduce some South American birds and their habitats with photos from his travels in Peru and Ecuador. He will discuss his research on habitat specialization of Amazonian birds, focusing on a rich community of birds that specialize on native bamboo habitat in the Amazon of southeast Peru.
APR. 16 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Nina Schoch	Nina Schoch, from the Adirondack Cooperative Loon Program (ACLP), will present, "Mercury and Migration: Conservation through the Lives of Adirondack Loons," an overview of the loon conservation efforts conducted in New York's Adirondack Park by the Wildlife Conservation Society and its partners in the ACLP. Using beautiful photographs and video clips, Nina will discuss common loons and their natural history, as well as the ACLP's research on the impact of environmental mercury pollution.
APR. 23 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Christie Todd Whitman	Christie Todd Whitman, former governor of New Jersey and former head of the Environmental Protection Agency, will present, "The Politics and Policies of Environmental Protection." Governor Whitman will address the issues confronting environmental protection and conservation. Her environmental legacy illustrates the challenges that politicians must overcome as government leaders and environmental stewards.
APR. 30 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Katy Payne	Katy Payne, visiting fellow at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will present, "Louis Agassiz Fuertes: His Art, Life, and Letters." Louis Agassiz Fuertes was one of the influential early leaders at the Lab of Ornithology, even coining the name of the sanctuary "Sapsucker Woods." In this engrossing seminar, Katy, the artist's granddaughter, guides the audience through Fuertes' life by showing a selection of his paintings and sketches, reading a few bits from his letters, and talking about his life and times.

March Speaker Profile: Rachel Vallender

Rachel completed her undergraduate degree in Psychology from McMaster University in 1996. She began graduate work at Queen's University in September 2000 studying the hybridization dynamics between Golden-winged Warblers and Blue-winged Warblers from a behavioral perspective. In April 2002 she turned her work into a Ph.D. project, completing her Ph.D. in May 2006. Rachel began a post-doctorate position at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in June 2006 where she has been using a variety of genetic markers to continue her hybridization study. She is

interested in various aspects of avian mate choice, disease, and genetic patterns of hybridization. Rachel has a great passion for bird conservation and has been a keen birder for many years.

In her presentation Rachel will talk about patterns of mate choice and impacts of interbreeding between Golden-winged Warblers and Blue-winged Warblers based on her dissertation research. She also will explore the history of the species in this area and will discuss what we can expect in future years. 

MINUTES: CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING

FEBRUARY 12, 2007

BY SUZANNE HENDERSON

President Deirdre Anderson lead the meeting with greetings to everyone present. A warm welcome was given to new members and guests. Deirdre said we have 146 members, 15 of which are new. A hearty thank you was extended to Marie Read for providing cookies to be enjoyed after the meeting. Gladys Birdsall volunteered to bring cookies for the March 12 meeting.

RECENT SIGHTINGS

- Short-eared owls on Scoffield Road
- Pine Warbler and Eastern Towhee in Freeville

OLD BUSINESS

- Linda Clougherty had to cancel the Amherst Island (Lake Ontario) trip scheduled for February 3–4 due to the excessive lake effect snow that buried the area in 10 or more feet.
- The hosts of the Earth Day Celebration, April 21–22, are still looking for a volunteer (or volunteers) to help with a guided bird walk scheduled for the morning of April 21. Linnette Short came to our January meeting to outline the activities planned for that weekend. Deirdre asked for anyone interested in volunteering to contact Linnette at <lshort@tompkins-co.org>.
- Deirdre reminded everyone to participate in the 10th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count, sponsored by Audubon and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. This four-day continent-wide event, February 16–19, collects bird sighting information and is a wonderful example of citizen science. The results of the count can be viewed at <www.birdsource.org/gbbc>.

NEW BUSINESS

- Asher Hockett has resigned as the club Webmaster. He did an excellent job. We need a new volunteer to upload the newsletter to the club's website and to keep the site current regarding officers and club activities (meetings, trips, and related events). Asher estimated that it took him 1–2 hours a month to maintain the site. Asher used WebDav, a Dreamweaver product, to interface with the Lab of Ornithology's servers, which store the club's web site. The club may need to purchase this or comparable software. We need to find a new Webmaster as soon as possible. Anyone

interested in helping the club through this vital position should contact Deirdre.

- Deirdre asked everyone to think about worthy projects in which the club could become involved or sponsor this year. One meeting attendee mentioned that Groton Elementary School wants to do some landscaping that will attract and benefit birds. A teacher there is also interested in expanding an instructional program about birds. If members know of other projects appropriate for the club to participate in or sponsor, they should submit details to Deirdre.
- The club is grateful to David Sprague for his valuable assistance in helping with the application for the Certificate of Incorporation, 501(c)(3). In appreciation for his time and effort, Deirdre announced that the club will donate \$100 to the Ithaca Housing Authority in the name of David Sprague.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The field trip around Cayuga Lake with Bob McGuire listed in the newsletter for Saturday, February 25, is actually on Sunday, February 25. The date was correct in the newsletter but the day of the week was incorrect.
- Deirdre reviewed other upcoming field trips and meetings.

CAYUGA LAKE BASIN BIRD LIST

Susan Danskin read the list and recorded responses.

EVENING PROGRAM

Hans Slabbekoorn, of Leiden University, Netherlands, provided a fascinating program: "Birdsong, Ecology, and Speciation; from Tropical Forest to Urban Jungle." Hans closely examined the vocal signatures of several species from three continents. It was amazing to learn that birds of the same species may have evolved vocalizations towards frequencies less impacted by the ambient noise of their environment. Urban, forest, and tropical sites present very different masking noise, and they alter sound transmission in different ways. Birds may evolve vocalization with frequencies different from the ambient noise so that their songs travel further. City birds and country birds of the same species may have different vocalizations adapted to their respective environments. 🐦

FIELD TRIP REPORT: AROUND THE LAKE, JANUARY 27

BY SHAWN BILLERMAN

Ann Mitchell, Nick Sly, Dan Lebbin, and Dan's friend, Erin, joined me for a very successful birding trip around the lake. We started at 7:30 A.M. at Scofield Road with an unsuccessful search for Short-eared Owls. However, we did see a nice dark-phase Rough-legged Hawk (the first of four for the day).

We went to Myers where we found mostly Mallards and Canada Geese but also American Black Ducks, Common Goldeneyes, American Coots, European Starlings, and a White-breasted Nuthatch. After leaving Myers, we headed up Lake Ridge Road, where we found a flock of American Tree Sparrows, and in with the flock Nick found two Savannah Sparrows. We then continued north to Long Point, where we found a flock of Redheads, a few Common Goldeneye groups, and some Ring-neck Ducks. We also found a few Golden-crowned Kinglets in some junipers along the road.

At Aurora Bay we were able to pick out a pale, Richardson's like, Cackling Goose in a large streaming raft of Canada Geese. The raft continued through Aurora, where we searched unsuccessfully for the Eared Grebe. We also stopped at Factory Road Pond to look for a Screech Owl but found none. We did find two American Wigeon in the pond.

We decided to pass up the Wildlife Drive and continued straight to the Mucklands where we found a lifeless barren winter landscape. Apart from a dozen Horned Larks and Snow Buntings on Van Dyne Spoor Road, there were hardly any birds. We went to Seneca Falls to look for gulls and found a few of the common gull species on the ice.

On recommendations from Tim Lenz and Mike Anderson, who we ran into at the Factory Road Pond, we went on to Ovid to look for Lapland Longspurs. On the way we found four Ring-necked Pheasants in a corn field just a couple miles north of Ovid on Route 414. Just south of Ovid, we found a large flock of Snow Bun-

tings and Horned Larks. We spent nearly a half hour searching the flock, as it kept on taking flight, circling around, and landing just on the far side of a hill. Dan, Erin, and I managed to get decent views of one Lapland Longspur, but Nick and Ann did not see it. While there, we also saw two Sharp-shinned Hawks.

We continued down the west side of the lake and back up to Myers where Ann had left her car. There were more gulls at Myers than there were earlier, and I found one bird that was different. It was a first winter bird, slightly larger than the Herring Gulls and very pale—very white head and pale coverts. It had dark primaries, pinkish gray legs, and a heavy, bicolor bill (base yellowish, tip black). Nick and I think that it may have been a hybrid Herring x Great Black-backed Gull.

After we left Myers, we decided to try Scofield Road again for Short-eared Owls, as it was dusk. We again struck out on the Short-ears, but as we were leaving, we found a Northern Shrike.

Other highlights from the day included Turkey Vultures in Lansing, Carolina Wren at Aurora Bluffs, Eastern Bluebirds east of Ovid, two kestrels—one near the Mucklands and one near Ovid, one Hooded Merganser at Long Point, and seven harriers for the day. 🐦



This Pine Warbler and Rufous-sided Towhee (inset), along with a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, visited feeders at a home in Freeville for a couple of weeks in February.

FIELD TRIP REPORT: EAST SIDE OF LAKE, FEBRUARY 10

BY TOM JOHNSON

A group of intrepid birders ventured forth into the wind on February 10. We started at Stewart Park where we found two Lesser Black-backed Gulls (one adult and one first cycle) but failed to find any white-winged gulls. Many gulls (easily more than 1000) were standing on the mid-lake ice floes quite a bit north of Stewart Park, but it was frustrating trying to see them because of the distortion over the water. From East Shore Park we found a female Red-breasted Merganser among a loose flock of Common Mergansers. Myers Point marina was full of birds, highlighted by a White-winged Scoter. Other birds around Myers included a lone Redhead, a hybrid Mallard x American Black Duck, 75+ Common Goldeneye, and a group of Eastern Bluebirds.

The next (and most important) stop for the morning was the Triangle Diner, where we thawed and refueled to the tune of short stacks, grilled cheese sandwiches, omelettes, and coffee. This was about when we started seeing Rough-legged Hawks everywhere we looked. We found three distant Rough-legged Hawks on Route 34B and on Lake Ridge Road coming north, but between the diner and Aurora we saw nine more!! Rafferty Road was the best spot, where we saw six or seven at one time, including unbelievable scope looks at three very beautiful dark-phase individuals. When we arrived in Aurora, it was quite windy and birdless, with the exception of a lone Horned Grebe, so we headed back to Ithaca and on the way found two more Rough-legged Hawks. Our group saw a grand total of 14 Rough-legged Hawks between Ithaca and Aurora. To cap it off, Rough-legged Hawk was a life bird for two in our group. Our return stop at Stewart Park as well as a visit to Stevenson Road yielded no new gulls, but we got some nice looks at Red-tailed Hawks. 🦅

Calling ravens

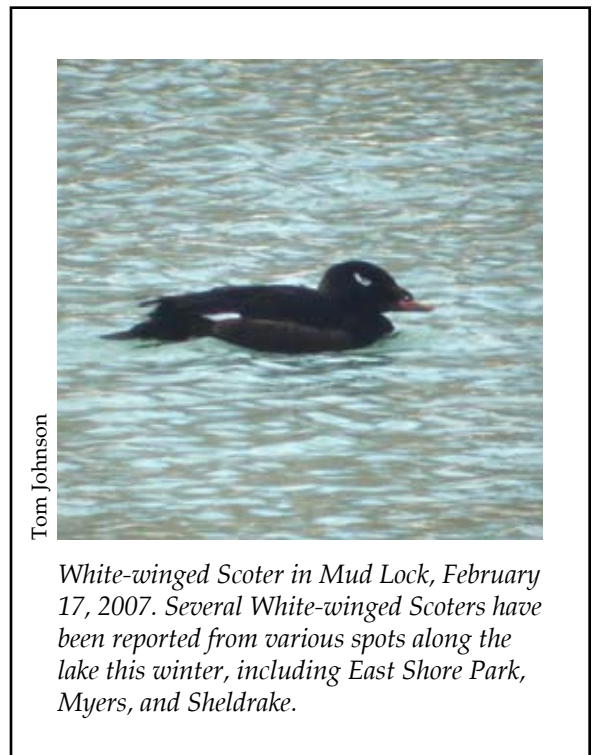
By Inta Ezergailis

You caw, as raucously as you know how,
but only crows respond — trusty crows
surefooted on the bare branch above us
in the bare black frosted trees;
craggy rocks, covered in thickish ice,
water gurgling beneath the crystal curtain.

I cannot find the crevice where last spring
three young ravens hatched, a rowdy trio
that we watched grow up, cricks set in our
necks all through April, watched them quarrel,
squawk, practice flying, and fill the deep
reclusive gorge with their hoarse cries.

We wait and hope for a new brood, a return
of clear rough greetings, needing the call
of this fierce life, not content with crocus tip
and snowdrop prod, needing a cry to pierce
the thick indifference of age and winter.

*Reprinted with permission from Inta's Poems I.
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Tom Johnson

White-winged Scoter in Mud Lock, February 17, 2007. Several White-winged Scoters have been reported from various spots along the lake this winter, including East Shore Park, Myers, and Sheldrake.

Recalling the Passenger Pigeon

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Americans also hunted the bird with bows and arrows. A Cayuga folktale, "The Mischievous Uncle and the Boy Wizard," relates how the boy wizard shot a single arrow through a number of pigeons sitting in a row on a tree branch.

Although the Passenger Pigeons preferred beech woods as hatching grounds, they built sturdy nests of twigs and sticks in many sorts of trees. Usually one egg to a nest and often 100 nests on a tree, eggs required two weeks to hatch. In two more weeks, the squabs were ready to fly. By then the Cayugas had left their villages and camped around the

enormous roosts. Hunters knocked birds out of their nests with long poles or cut down trees in the nesting areas.

In 1813, John J. Audubon tallied one billion Passenger Pigeons flying between Henderson and Louisville, Kentucky, in three days. Relentlessly pursued by commercial hunters, the bird population declined. The last Passenger Pigeon died in 1914 at the Cincinnati Zoological Gardens. To this day the Iroquois have a Pigeon Dance in memory of the Big Breads. 🐦

Cold Weather Brings White-winged Gulls

During January and February, several "white-winged" gulls mixed in with the more common species on the ice off of Stewart Park in Ithaca and on the compost piles on Stevenson Road in Dryden.



Iceland Gull (front) and first cycle Glaucous Gull (back), Stevenson Road, January 31.



Iceland Gull, Stevenson Road, February 3.

Christopher Wood



Second cycle Glaucous Gull, also at Stevenson Road on January 31.



First cycle Glaucous Gull, Stewart Park, January 30, perhaps the same gull shown in the top left photo a day later.

Ryan Douglas

Kevin McGowan (2)



Native Plants for Native Birds: Myrica (Bayberry)

BY JOEL BAINES

Different members of the genus *Myrica* cover North America, with an especially high concentration near the sandy coasts. The species most common in our area is northern bayberry or *Myrica pennsylvanica*. Much rarer but tolerant of our climate is sweet gale, or *Myrica gale*, which is a wet loving, low lying plant of acidic bogs, ponds, and lake shores. *M. pennsylvanica* is tolerant of salt, wind, dry weather, and extremely nutrient poor soils. The latter is a consequence of the ingenious symbiotic relationship bayberry has with bacteria of the genus *Frankia*, which convert nitrogen from the air into forms the plant can use for food. In turn, the plant provides unique niches in the roots that allow this bacteria to live and propagate. The relationship allows the plants to thrive in virtually nutrient free soils. Think sand dunes and wind—the habitat in which bayberry becomes dominant, forming small colonies as new sprouts arise from the roots.

The deciduous bushes are squat and round, as you might expect of a plant that will experience a lot of wind during its lifetime. The leaves are arranged alternately along stems and are thick, to avoid desiccation, with a prominent central vein and shiny surface. The defining characteristic, summer through winter, is the small prominent gray fruit that hugs the stems in small dense clusters.

The entire plant has a lovely scent when bruised that has attracted humans for hundreds (perhaps thousands) of years. Bayberry's claim to fame (and near demise) comes from the wax, myricin, that covers the seeds. This wax is not only an excellent insect and herbivore deterrent for the seeds but is also the source of bayberry candles. There are disheartening reports of colonists in the 1700's cutting and stripping branches from entire groves of bayberry just to harvest the berries. The plants are generally slow growers given their difficult lifestyle, so this branch stripping ensured rapid destruction of the plant throughout large regions of the eastern coast of the United States. Picking the berries rather than removing branches and stripping them is more tedious but spares the plants. You can make your own candles: four pounds of berries

makes one pound of light green wax, which you can mold to your liking.

There are other pickers of the fruit, of course, including most overwintering birds. Unlike the sugary nature of most fruits, the material covering bayberry seeds is high in fat, making this (like spicebush) one of the few fruits that provide this type of nutrient throughout the winter. Some have speculated that this feature alone is why bayberry can support overwintering Yellow-rumped Warblers in northern areas.

Most Ithaca gardens don't quite match bayberry's preferred natural habitat because we have plenty of moisture and Ithacay in most places. (For reasons that are obscure to me, a very healthy population of northern bayberry lives beside the train tracks near Greenstar grocery and the bus station downtown. Perhaps the sand and soil imported to raise



the tracks above the surrounding flood plain provides the ideal environment.) The problem with our soil is not a lack of nutrients but that the roots of plants like bayberry have a difficult time penetrating deep enough to harvest the rich source of minerals. The excep-

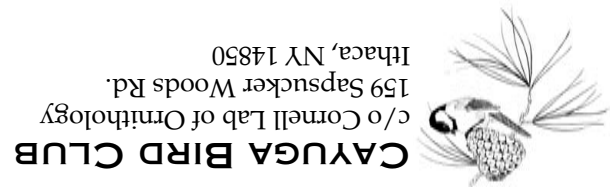
tions are alluvial plains with plenty of loam or sand. The plants do well in any well drained airy (garden) soil with little attention, and a dash of fertilizer will speed them on their way. Full sun is an absolute must.

Like many plants with especially aromatic leaves, bayberry is very deer and rabbit resistant. The critters simply do not seem to like the taste permeating the leaves, stems, and fruit. Although occasional browsing might occur in winter if a plant is positioned in the middle of a deer path, bayberry remains largely spared even then. Bayberry should be a strong consideration for those who live in high deer pressure areas, have the soil to foster growth, and would like a bird-friendly and maintenance-free plant to place around feeders, ponds, or hedges. 🐦

*Short-eared Owl, Rafferty Road in
Ledyard, February 17, 2007.*



Tom Johnson



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COLD WEATHER BRINGS WHITE-WINGED
GULLS

NATIVE PLANTS FOR NATIVE BIRDS:
MYRICA (BAYBERRY)



Kevin Frasier

*Rachel removing a Golden-winged Warbler from
a mist net.*

NEXT MEETING MARCH 12

RACHEL VALLENDER, FEATURED SPEAKER

“GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER’S HISTORY,
HYBRIDIZATION, AND CONSERVATION”

SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS