



Cayuga Bird Club

NEWSLETTER

ESTABLISHED 1914

MAY 2007

NEW WEB SITE DESIGN UNVEILED

BY ANNE MARIE JOHNSON

Club President Deirdre Anderson enlisted the help of Mac Myers, a web designer at The CBORD Group and one of Deirdre's former co-workers, to help her modernize the Cayuga Bird Club web site. The end result was presented at the April meeting to rave reviews. The new design is fresh, attractive, and inviting.

A navigation bar at the top of the new home page (shown below) provides links to the site's four major sections: Calendar, Membership, Newsletter, and Resources. The calendar page provides information about club activities. The Membership page provides instructions for joining the club. The Newsletter page provides links to pdf files of past newsletters as well as the current newsletter.

The Resources page leads to the heart of the web site. This page used to provide a long, cumbersome list of links and resources. Deirdre and Mac's new design divides the links into three easy-to-read columns. Additionally, the club's photo page is now linked right on the home page in a column of easy-to-find icons that can be expanded to include other popular links.

Look for the new web pages to be posted on the club's web site soon. A special thank you goes to Deirdre for doing such a great job. This new web design is just one of many outstanding contributions Deirdre has made to the club during her tenure as president. 🐦



Portion of new Cayuga Bird Club home page.

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/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


For those of you who missed the April meeting, there is much to catch up on. The most exciting piece of information is that we finally received our 501(c) (3) status. It is official, and I cannot be happier. Laura Stenzler, Kim Kline, and Marci Finlay did a lot of hard work, so please let them know how thankful you are for all the time and effort spent accomplishing this amazing feat!

The other exciting news I have to share is that the look of our website has changed. A big round of applause goes to a former workplace colleague of mine, Mac Myers, who kindly redesigned our website. I hope you find the navigation a bit more intuitive and the overall look to be fresh and up-to-date.

In conjunction with this effort, Linda Clougherty and Jane Graves have put a lot of effort into redesigning our brochure; now we have a similar look for our website, brochure, and newsletter. I am happy that we achieved this goal, and you should give a great round of applause to Linda and Jane for putting in so much time, delivering the message of what wonderful things we offer.

Finally, I have some sad news, which I announced at the meeting. I will be resigning my post as President after the May meeting. I recently was laid off from my position at The CBORD Group and am relocating to Richmond, Virginia, starting in the beginning of June. I cannot begin to express my regrets in not being able to fulfill my commitment to the club as President. I have thoroughly enjoyed my almost two years as an officer and hope that I have accomplished a lot, positioning the club to excel in the coming years.

I have truly enjoyed meeting each and every one of you, whether at our monthly gatherings or during field trips. I have learned so much through you about birds and the surrounding Ithaca area, and I will miss you terribly, as a group and as individual friends. It is my deepest wish for the club to enjoy continued success, and I am proud to be part of its tradition and its continuing educational endeavors. Good birding to all!



Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
MAY 6 Sunday 7:00 A.M.– 11:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Sapsucker Woods Leader: Self-guided Meet: Johnson Center	Meet at the Lab of Ornithology's far parking lot for this informal, self-guided walk around Sapsucker Woods. Call Ann Mitchell at 277-2926 with questions.
MAY 7 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Jonathan Trouern-Trend	Jonathan Trouern-Trend, from the 188th Area Support Medical Battalion of the Connecticut National Guard and the American Red Cross, will present "Birding Babylon: a Soldier-Naturalist in Iraq." Jonathan will discuss the natural history of Iraq in the context of his deployment and as a crossroad of familiar palearctic birds as well as exotic Afrotropical and Oriental avifauna. He also will detail the revitalization of the Southern Mesopotamian marshes and address the nascent (but growing) Iraqi environmental movement.
MAY 12 Saturday 7:00 A.M.– 12:00 noon	Field Trip: Local hot spots Leader: Gladys Birdsall Meet: Johnson Center	It is warbler migration time, and this trip will visit local warbler hot spots. Meet at the Lab's far parking lot for this half day trip. Wear appropriate shoes. Call Gladys at 257-0130 with questions.
MAY 14 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Marie Read	Natural history photographer and Ithacan Marie Read will present "Chasing Summer Down Under: Birding Travels in Australia." Marie and her husband, Peter Wrege, traveled around Australia from September to December, 2006, photographing birds, beasts, and habitats. She will share her adventures in this photographic safari. See speaker profile on page 5 for more information.
MAY 17 Thursday	Newsletter deadline	Note change in day for this deadline. Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
MAY 19 Saturday 7:00 A.M.– 12:00 noon	Field Trip: Local hot spots Leader: Ann Mitchell Meet: Johnson Center*	This will be a local trip to wherever birds have recently been reported. Possible destinations include Beam Hill and the Hawthorne Orchard. Wear appropriate shoes. Call Ann at 277-2926 if you have any questions.
MAY 19 Saturday 9:00 A.M.– 2:00 P.M.	International Migratory Bird Day Celebration Cornell Lab of Ornithology	Visitors can participate in a variety of hands-on activities for children, take guided bird walks, and learn what can be done to reduce the impact of global climate change on birds and the environment—the theme of this year's event. Admission is free.
MAY 26 Saturday 6:30 A.M.– 4:00 P.M.	Field Trip: Local hot spots Leaders: Shawn Billerman and Nick Sly Meet: Johnson Center*	This trip will last all day and will include visits to many local birding spots such as the Lindsay Parsons Biodiversity Preserve to look for Worm-eating and Prairie warblers, Beam Hill, Creamery Road to look for Clay-colored Sparrows, and possibly a trip to Seneca Falls, finishing up at the Cayuga Lake Creamery to reward ourselves for a great day of birding. Bring snacks and lunch, and wear appropriate shoes. There also will be a stop along the way to get food. Call Shawn with questions at (516) 376-4587.
JUNE 11 Monday 6:00 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Myers Park, Lansing Dish-to-pass dinner	The annual dish-to-pass dinner will be held at Myers Park in Lansing (off Route 34B) in the first pavilion on the right, near the birding kiosk. Bring a generous dish to share, something to drink, and your own table setting. A few tablecloths also are needed. There will be a very brief business meeting before dinner. Don't forget to bring your binoculars.

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

MINUTES: CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING

APRIL 9, 2007

BY SUZANNE HENDERSON

President Deirdre Anderson opened the meeting with a warm welcome to all in attendance. Deirdre thanked Linda Clougherty for providing cookies to be enjoyed after the meeting, and Susan Danskin volunteered to bring cookies for the May 14 meeting.

RECENT SIGHTINGS

Many exciting sightings were reported including:

- Eastern Screech-Owl (Gray phase)
- Pine Warbler
- Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
- Northern Flicker
- Forster's Tern
- Caspian Tern at Stewart Park
- Bonaparte's Gull
- Osprey
- Merlin
- American Woodcocks
- American Kestrel
- Killdeer
- Eastern Phoebe
- Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned kinglets
- Chipping, Song, and Fox sparrows
- Great Horned Owl at Willow Glen Cemetery in Dryden

OLD BUSINESS

- Deirdre encouraged someone to volunteer to help with the Earth Day Celebration bird walk.
- We will inquire of John Confer at a later date about the proposed biomass and ethanol plant at the former Seneca Army Depot.
- Deirdre was delighted to announce receiving confirmation of the Cayuga Bird Clubs 501(c)(3) status. Contributions now will be tax deductible, although the bookkeeping may be a bit more complicated for the club records.

NEW BUSINESS

- Deirdre unveiled a new club website design. The website still was being tested and proofed, but once it is complete the new site will be more user friendly, making the wealth of information there easier to find. The brochure will use some of the design features of the new web site to give the web site, brochure, and newsletter a similar look and feel.

- Deirdre shared some sad news with the club; she will be leaving the Ithaca area very soon due to a change in her employment. She is resigning after the May meeting and may be gone before the June dish-to-pass dinner.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Bob McGuire distributed flyers about the Finger Lakes Land Trust Spring Bird Quest to be held May 26–28 (Memorial Day Weekend). Bob explained that participants will watch and listen for birds on the land trust's preserves and tally the number of species found. Registration fees and pledges will help raise funds to support the land trust's efforts to preserve vital bird habitat in the Finger Lakes Region. Bob encouraged everyone to participate or to sponsor a participant. An informational meeting for volunteers will be held on Thursday, May 24, from 4–6 P.M. at the Land Trust headquarters, 202 E. Court St., in Ithaca. The registration deadline to participate is May 18. For more information visit <www.fllt.org> or call (607) 275-9487.
- Deirdre reviewed upcoming field trips and seminars and announced that Marie Read will be the speaker at the next club meeting.

CAYUGA LAKE BASIN BIRD LIST

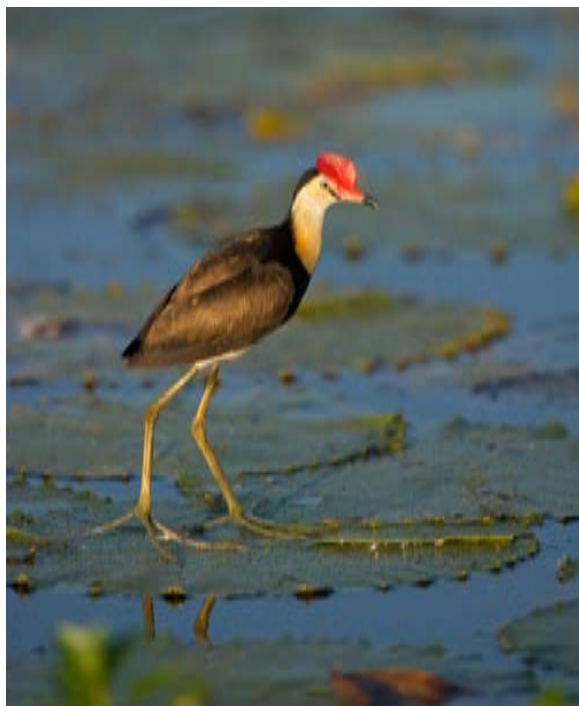
Reading of the Cayuga Lake Basin Bird List was completed by Bob McGuire.

EVENING PROGRAM

Dan Lebbin, Cornell Ph.D. candidate and Cayuga Bird Club member, presented "Habitat Specialization Among South American Birds." Dan started his program with an extensive photo tour from the Pacific Ocean over the Andes through Peru and Ecuador to the interior Amazon. He described different habitat zones influenced by elevation, temperature, and available moisture, showing delightful glimpses of the diverse birdlife supported in each. Dan then presented his research on habitat specialization of Amazonian birds of southeast Peru to determine if bamboo supports more specialists than other habitats. During the rainy season bamboo can grow at a rate of 10–15 cm per day. Dan's research includes recording and closely examining the activities of a rich community of birds (383 species of diurnal insectivorous birds) that specialize on native bamboo habitat. 🐦

May Speaker Profile: Marie Read

Marie Read's interest in wildlife photography started during the mid-80s while she was working as a field research assistant



Marie Read

A Comb-crested Jacana on a water lily leaf in Kakadu National Park, Australia, one of the many beautiful birds that Marie Read photographed on her recent trip.

studying White-fronted Bee-eaters in Kenya, East Africa. She accompanied her husband, biologist Peter Wrege, during his research in Panama during the 1990s, also making several trips to Costa Rica. During this time she obtained unique photographs of courting manakins, as well as of many other neotropical birds.

In 1997 she joined the Cornell Lab of Ornithology as photo/illustrations editor for the Home Study Course in Bird Biology. Later she was part of the All About Birds website development team, as well as working on various exhibits in the Lab's Visitor Center.

Marie "retired" from the Lab in 2005 and has since pursued wildlife photography full-time. She is the author of many magazine articles and photo essays about birds and bird behavior, appearing in *Living Bird*, *Birder's World*, and *Bird Watcher's Digest*. Her photos appear in magazines, books, and calendars worldwide. With sound recordist Lang Elliott, Marie co-authored *Common Birds and Their Songs*, published in 1998. Her latest book, *Secret Lives of Common Birds: Enjoying Bird Behavior Through the Seasons*, was published in September 2005.

In autumn 2006, Marie and Peter embarked on their most ambitious project to date, a three-month wildlife photography and sound-recording trip to Australia. Featuring beautiful images and sounds, Marie's presentation will share some of the highlights of their adventures. 🐦

FIELD TRIP REPORT: SUMMERHILL, MARCH 24

BY STEVE FAST

Three people joined my wife and me on a field trip to the Summerhill area. We left the Lab of Ornithology shortly after 7:00 A.M., finding few birds of interest there. We passed through Dryden village and headed for Salt Road. At the south end of Salt Road, we happened upon a group of about 15 birders from the bird club at Lime Hollow Nature Center in Cortland. We stopped and chatted for a while. They also were headed for Summerhill where we met again later, somewhat disappointing them by not having located any crossbills.

We headed up Salt Road, and just beyond Route 90, we found five Canada Geese and a Snow Goose standing in a field next the road. This close proximity provided us with a great opportunity to study the snow goose, a life bird for one of our group.

We parked along Salt Road, a little south of Hoag Road, and walked. We all got a fine view of a Red-breasted Nuthatch, saw a Sharp-shinned Hawk circle low overhead, heard a distant Common Raven, and listened to the singing of Brown-headed Cowbirds, Golden-crowned Kinglets, and a Purple Finch.

After discussing this habitat and the birds found in it, we traveled to the Lake Como inlet, where we saw a dazzling Pileated Woodpecker display. We headed south along Lake Como Road, stopping at the entrance to the McIlroy Preserve and at the fishing access turnoff to the south to discuss the different habitats and the birds likely to be found therein.

We then motored north along the east side of Lake Como, following an ever-diminishing Fall Creek until we finally arrived at its headwaters in a small wooded cove just south of Iowa Road. At that point, feeling in need of relief and refreshment, we returned to the Lake Como Inn on the northeast shore of the lake. Sipping coffee while waiting for fries and grilled cheese sandwiches, we stepped out onto the new deck overlooking the lake and watched thousands of Snow Geese in various lines and intersecting Vs passing overhead.

After searching diligently for American Pipits the whole morning, we finally found five foraging with a group of American Robins in a field along Lick Street on our way back to base. 🐦



Native Plants for Native Birds: *Quercus rubra* (Northern Red Oak)

BY JOEL BAINES, PHOTOS BY DAVID RUPPERT

Our property contains a few Northern Red Oak trees (*Quercus rubra*) on the forest edge that are the first to catch the earliest rays of morning sun. Every morning in the early spring, warblers flock to these trees, each bird with an intense interest in the opening buds. I do not know if it is the early sun, the buds themselves, or a tasty insect population that is the attraction, but this grove of trees is always a warbler magnet. (It is also a source of "warbler neck," since the trees are about 60-80 feet tall!)

The leaves of red oak have 8-11 lobes with sharp points, closely resembling those of black oak (*Quercus velutina*), but very different from the leaves of white oak (*Quercus alba*) whose lobes are rounder. The bark on red oak is rather distinctive, highlighted by flattened smooth vertical plates running the length of the trunk. In the forest, the trunks run tall and straight, while in the open the tree obtains a more spread out and squat stature.

This is one of the most important trees of the hardwood forests in Eastern North America, with a northern range approaching the northern shores of the Great Lakes, a southern border in Alabama, and a western border in Eastern Kansas. It is a very important commercial tree. Lumbering has mostly culled the older specimens and left many managed forests with a perpetually young population. The occasional giant that has escaped the axe is a sight to behold: with trunks that can be more than 20 feet in girth and 100 feet in height. They are relatively rapid growers for oaks (1-2 feet a year), depending on soil and light.

In addition to the many insects these trees apparently provide for birds, they are also an essential part of the increasingly fragmented eastern forest canopy, a necessity for successful nesting of many bird species such as the Scarlet Tanager and many woodland warblers. Moreover, the acorns are an important source of food for many mammals and birds, with especially heavy crops every 3-5 years. These so called "mast

years" are believed to represent a saturation strategy the trees use to overwhelm predation and promote propagation. As we all know, the trees also take advantage of mammals' and birds' (especially jays') caching behaviors to ensure the seeds are planted widely: much farther than a proverbial acorn can fall from the parent tree. Underscoring the importance of the relationship between bird and plant, in general



Red-bellied Woodpecker with half an acorn in Sapsucker Woods, October 7, 2006.

where there are good populations of jays, there are robust populations of oaks. The acorns are also important food sources for chipmunks, squirrels, red and gray fox, deer, woodchucks, Wild Turkey, Ruffed Grouse, mice, voles, and a host of insect larvae.

Natural propagation of red oak is being com-

promised by white tailed deer that eat the very young seedlings, and some otherwise oak rich woodlands have few red oak saplings. As a result, I encourage anyone to give red oak propagation a try. There are a range of methods to do this. Perhaps the most instantly gratifying method exploits the fact that many red oak seedlings/saplings under 4 feet in height are topped by deer year after year. These stunted trees nevertheless continue to grow their roots downward and outward, so a stump only 2-4 feet high might have a 12-20 year old root system with a tap root running upwards of 12 feet deep! A simple barrier

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Native Plants for Native Birds: *Quercus rubra* (Northern Red Oak)

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placed to prevent deer from browsing stunted red oak saplings allows the top to grow unimpeded (for the first time in 20 years in some cases) resulting in amazingly fast growth rates driven by the large amount of root-provided energy. Expect 2–6 feet of growth in a single season in many cases! Once above 6 feet, the top is out of reach of deer and the tree will continue its inexorable ascent to the canopy. It's the closest thing to an instant hardwood forest there is.

Propagation from seed is also fun for kids and adults alike, but there are a few tricks. Collecting the acorns is easy, but they die if they dry out, and there are a myriad of insect weevils that live in and kill acorns. To see if an acorn is viable, drop it in a pale of water. The good ones sink: they do not have air pockets due to weevil burrowing or drying out. Once you have a bunch of good acorns, they have to be kept moist and cold for at least 90 days before

they will germinate. This process, called cold stratifying, can be done by planting them about ½ inch deep wherever you want your trees. Plant in several locations spaced far apart so you do not lose the entire batch should it get discovered. (Expect to lose many to critters in any case.) If you want to increase the likelihood of success, put your acorns inside a plastic bag with some moist shredded cedar bark mulch or vermiculite, and refrigerate (do not freeze) for 90 days. Alternatively, you can put the bag outside but you *must* protect it from the various critters who think you have put out nice food for them. I have buried the bag in a pile of loose cedar bark mulch with success. If you left it outside, plant the acorns in the ground in the spring. If you were late, and rootlets

are present, no problem. Just plant them delicately in the ground without disturbing the roots. The refrigerated acorns will not sprout until you place them in warmer air. In either case you have to protect these early seedlings because they are apparently just as tasty as the acorns. (I have learned this the hard way.) Hardware cloth is a big help here. Only after a year are the seedlings less appealing to predators. I also have heard of a cute trick for people who own woodlands: plant your acorns under a multiflora rose, or surround the planting site with clipped multiflora branches. The rose branches rot very slowly

and protect the seedlings from predation by almost anything until they get big enough to survive a topping or two.

Another propagation method is to buy seedlings from the county or local nurseries. The county stock is a bit iffy: the tap roots of these bare root plants are often damaged or dried out and many do not survive transplanting,

although it is hard to argue with 50 cents a plant. My small sample has had about a 20%–30% survival rate. Two to three year old plants with air pruned roots in long pots (called tree bands) are the best way to go (available at tree farms). Although they are more expensive (less than \$10 per plant), they likely will survive the transplanting. Keep deer off until the trees exceed deer height (about eight years). Larger trees can be purchased for instant gratification, but these cost over \$100, require a strong back or earthmoving equipment to plant, and require good care to ensure survival since much of the root system was compromised when the tree was dug. Once established however, they are as tough as any tree grown naturally in the forest. 🐦

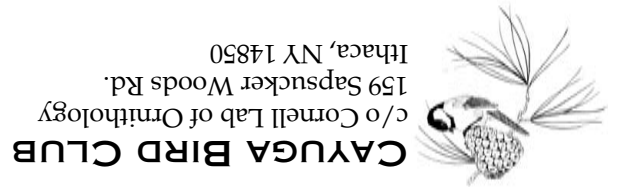


Rose-breasted Grosbeak eating young oak leaves in the Hawthorn Orchard, May 13, 2006.

Little Gull seen in a group of Bonaparte's Gulls at Stewart Park, April 17, 2007.



Ryan Douglas



Southern Cassowary, Marie Read

NEXT MEETING MAY 14

MARIE READ, FEATURED SPEAKER
"CHASING SUMMER DOWN UNDER: BIRDING TRAVELS IN AUSTRALIA"

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NATIVE PLANTS FOR NATIVE BIRDS:
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