



Cayuga Bird Club NEWSLETTER

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NOVEMBER 2007

Meet Our Newest Officers

BY MARK CHAO

Corresponding Secretary Susan Earle

In her youth birds were a big part of Susan Earle's life. "I was a child of birders," she recalls. "I was always being handed binoculars, and always having birds pointed out to me. I thought that that was just what people did when they went out hiking."

But, Susan says, "I like to joke that I had to enter middle age to become a birder." Susan first joined the local Ithaca birding scene when she responded to an advertisement seeking volunteers for the Lab of Ornithology's Ithaca City School District outreach program. Shortly thereafter, she took her first trip to Costa Rica, which further advanced her interest in birds.

Soon she enrolled in the Lab's Spring Field Ornithology course. "On my first field trip," Susan recalls, "we were walking in Sapsucker Woods with Steve Kress. Even though it was a cold day, I enjoyed myself so much! I remember hearing a beautiful, haunting sound in the woods that someone identified as a Red-bellied Woodpecker. I had been hearing that sound for years in the woods in my backyard, not bothering to find out what made it, and when I saw what I'd been missing, I was amazed!"

Susan worked for eight years as a lecturer in managerial communications at the hotel school at Cornell. Now she works at the Lab of Ornithology in the Bioacoustics Research Program and the Macaulay Library.

Susan lives with her husband Brian near Shindagin Hollow. Brian and Susan share a love of jazz; he, a professional clarinetist, and she, a singer, have performed together at weddings, and at onetime they had a regular gig at a local restaurant. Besides Brian, Susan says that the other light of her life is her daughter, aged 20, who is an aspiring actress in New York City.

Susan and Brian see many birds around their home, including numerous warblers in spring and summer,



Brian Earle

and, in mid-October 2007, Susan's first Pine Siskins. "I had been reading on the [Cayugabirds-L] listserv that they were around," Susan says, "so I studied them in the field guide. Then I looked out at our feeders and took a closer look at those birds that looked a little different from the goldfinches. There were seven Pine Siskins! I'm not a lister, but I was very excited. And I do love the feeling of knowing that there are so many lifers left to find."

Club President Susan Danskin

1. WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO ITHACA TO LIVE?

In 1985, I came to Cornell to study engineering. By the middle of my sophomore year, I realized engineering wasn't for me. I transferred to the arts school and entered a five year math and science teaching program.... After graduating with a Bachelor's in Mathematics and an M.A. in Teaching, I was hired as a math teacher at DeWitt. I taught 7th grade for ten years and am currently in my eighth year teaching 8th grade. So, like many people, I came to Ithaca for Cornell and never left.



Provided by Susan Danskin

2. TELL US HOW YOU BECAME A BIRDER.

My initial interest in birds was very casual. As a child, I remember asking my father to help me identify a hawk, and he explained that the bird was a Turkey Vulture and that you could tell by the way it held its wings in a dihedral. In the late 90's, I was traveling in Montana and again was intrigued by the hawks I was observing, so I bought a Golden field guide and fumbled my way through a few identifications. Back in Ithaca, I noticed a bird with a crest that had bright yellow on its wings and tail and that appeared smooth and shiny. The next day the science teacher on my team, John Morris, helped me identify it as a Cedar Waxwing. Another colleague, Judy Lutes, was just beginning to bird, and she invited me for a day of birding. Despite the fact that she dumped me into a ditch

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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 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/CAYUGABIRDCLUB

From the President

Several years ago, a friend of mine predicted that one day I would be president of the Cayuga Bird Club. I vehemently argued that would never be the case. At the time, I felt like a newcomer without the experience or abilities necessary to lead the club. Well, what can I say? Thanks to the wonderful kindness and comradery of too many club members to mention, I no longer feel like a newcomer. However, I still have little nagging doubts about my experience and abilities, which makes me extremely grateful to have such a wonderful group of people with whom to work. I regularly will be relying on the knowledge and experience of Vice-President Laura Stenzler, Treasurer Kim Kline, Recording Secretary Suzanne Henderson, and Directors Bard Prentiss and John Confer, all of whom are continuing in their elected positions. I look forward to sharing the energy and enthusiasm being brought to the club by newly elected Corresponding Secretary Susan Earle and Director Jeff Gerbracht. Without the efforts of Ann Mitchell, Linda Clougherty, Anne Marie Johnson, Carol Felton Schmitt, Cindy Twardokus, and all of the people who volunteer as speakers and field trip leaders, I know that many of the club's activities and projects would go undone. Together I am confident we can maintain the vibrancy and traditions of the Cayuga Bird Club.

I must say that Deirdre Anderson, former club president, left some mighty big shoes to fill when she migrated south last spring. Under her leadership the club achieved tax exempt status, acquired liability insurance, and worked to increase its visibility in the community through an updated website and an informational brochure. Thank you so much, Deirdre, for the dedication and vision you brought to the club. Yours will be a tough act to follow, but you have inspired me to do my very best. A special thanks also to Laura Stenzler for stepping in to finish Deirdre's term as President and to Gladys Birdsall for stepping in to finish Laura's term as Vice President. Likewise, thanks to Ann Mitchell and Kevin McGowan who, after serving the club valiantly, are stepping down from their positions as Corresponding Secretary and Director, respectively.

Now, on a lighter note, it's time for true confessions. How many of you are willing to admit that you dream about birds? Well I do, and sometimes those dreams are just plain weird. Lately, I have been on a quest to see brant as they migrate through the basin. In my dreams last night, I saw a brant sitting on the water with some Canada geese. The weird part is that the brant looked nothing like a brant and the Canadas looked nothing like Canadas. Somehow, one part of my brain was able to see those birds for what I wanted them to be and another part was able to register that they didn't look right at all. Too bad that couldn't happen in real life. I'd have a great time trying to explain to my birding companions how that mallard was really the brant I had been searching for. Here's hoping that you all are able to find the birds you are looking for without having to resort to dreams or tricks of the mind.

Susan

Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
NOV. 3 Saturday 7:30 A.M.– 2:00 P.M.	Field Trip: Local Hotspots Leader: Paul Hurtado Meet: Johnson Center*	This trip may include Mt. Pleasant if conditions are right. If the weather is really poor, the trip may be moved to November 4. Contact Paul with questions at <pauljh@cam.cornell.edu>.
NOV. 5 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Ernesto Ruelas Inzunza	In his presentation, "The State of North American Birds of Prey," Ernesto Ruelas Inzunza, a research scholar at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will discuss population trends for 20+ species of hawks using migration counts from 22 sites across Canada, the U.S., and Mexico.
NOV. 10 Saturday 6:50 A.M.– 9:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Loon Watch Leader: Bob Meade Meet: Cass Park Skating Rink or Taughannock Park	Meet Gladys Birdsall at the Cass Park Skating Rink at 6:30 A.M. or Bob at Taughannock Park at dawn (approximately 6:50 A.M.) for a morning of counting migrating loons. If the conditions are right, you could see many Common Loons and possibly some Red-throated Loons. Please wear appropriate clothing for the venture. A strong wind will make it very cold! There will be warm cider and donuts. If you need directions or want to carpool, contact Gladys at 257-0130 or gjb5@cornell.edu.
NOV. 12 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Martha Fischer	Martha Fischer and Geoffrey Keller spent three weeks in Newfoundland collecting audio recordings for the Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. In her presentation, "Recording Birds in Newfoundland," Martha will share some of the bird sounds they recorded as well as some photos from their trip. See speaker profile on page 4 for more information.
NOV. 15 Thursday	Newsletter deadline	Note the early deadline for November. Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
NOV. 18 Sunday 7:30 A.M.– 12:00 P.M.	Field Trip: Local Hotspots Leader: Bill Baker Meet: Johnson Center*	This trip may look for winter finches or waterfowl on the lake, depending on what has been seen in the area prior to the trip. Dress for the weather. Contact Bill with questions at 275-0540 or at bilbaker@lightlink.com.
NOV. 19 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Ann Warde	Early Macaulay Library recordings of natural sounds have played an important role for American experimental composers. Through visual images of musical structure and an anecdotal history about how composers were first drawn to these recordings, Ann Warde, Research Analyst at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will explore how the recorded material was translated into music in her presentation, "Natural Sound: Science, Music, Experiment." Ann will also present some of the source recordings and the music that they inspired.
DEC. 1-2 Saturday– Sunday	Field Trip: Niagara Falls Leader: Kevin McGowan	This two day trip to Niagara Falls, Canada, will search for rare gulls and other species. Contact Kevin McGowan at kjm2@cornell.edu or at 342-2430 for information.
DEC. 3 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Scott Sillett	The seasonal movement of billions of migratory birds across the globe is one of the great spectacles of nature. In his presentation, "Connecting the Seasons and Populations of Migratory Birds," Scott Sillett will describe how recent advances help us understand migratory connectivity and seasonal interactions, which are essential to understanding migratory bird biology.

*Meet for field trips in the front parking lot.

Events Calendar continued

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
DEC. 10 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Benjamin Clock and Michael Anderson	In their multimedia presentation, "Collecting the Sounds and Images of Alaska's Birds: A Chronicle of a Macaulay Library Big Year Expedition," Benjamin Clock and Michael Andersen, from the Macaulay Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will share experiences from their sound recording expeditions to the mountains, islands, and tundra of Alaska.
DEC. 15 Saturday	Field Trip: Short-eared Owls	See next newsletter for details.

MINUTES: CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING, OCTOBER 8

BY SUZANNE HENDERSON

Laura Stenzler introduced herself and gave a warm welcome to everyone attending. She reminded club members that annual dues are now due, and she welcomed new folks to join. The dues are \$15 for a family or individual and \$10 for students. The newsletter can be sent electronically (in color) or by mail (black & white). Laura offered copies of the September newsletter for folks to take and read. She also thanked Susan Danskin for providing cookies to be enjoyed following the program and recruited a volunteer to bring cookies next month.

RECENT SIGHTINGS

Pine Siskins, Evening Grosbeaks, and calling Screech Owls were among the highlights reported.

OLD BUSINESS

- Laura introduced the slate of officers and one Director. She invited nominations from the floor. Hearing none, she asked for a motion to accept the slate as presented. Ann Mitchell made the motion, and Kevin McGowan seconded it. All club members were asked to vote either in favor, opposed, or abstained, and the slate was approved unanimously.
- Kevin McGowan served as one of the club's representatives to the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) annual meeting. He gave a brief overview of the activities and purpose of NYSOA. He then reported on highlights from the meeting that was recently held in Batavia, New York:
 - Membership Club Awards are available for the 46 bird clubs in the federation to utilize.
 - NYSOA recently started a Whip-poor-will Monitoring Project because of declining numbers.
 - A young birder presented a proposal for a young birders club to be sponsored by NYSOA.
 - The New York Breeding Bird Atlas manuscript went to Cayuga Press for publication next fall.
 - A committee formed to evaluate wind energy, chaired by John Confer, presented a position paper, which was accepted by NYSOA.

John Confer, who served as the club's second representative, highlighted other aspects of NYSOA, such as the Avian Records Committee, which is made up completely of volunteers.


ANNOUNCEMENTS

Laura reviewed the upcoming seminars and trips. The next meeting will be Monday, November 12, with guest speaker Martha Fischer.


CAYUGA LAKE BASIN BIRD LIST

Newly elected president Susan Danskin recorded which birds were seen during the previous week.

EVENING PROGRAM

Laura introduced Carlos Botero, a behavioral ecologist who recently completed his Ph.D. at Cornell in the Neurobiology and Behavior Department and is currently teaching Methods in Animal Behavior. Carlos presented some of the findings of his research on Tropical Mockingbirds. Male Tropical Mockingbirds usually sing extremely elaborate songs, and they continue to develop their repertoire as they get older. Carlos talked about his study of the evolution of song and song learning, which included the bird's natural history, environment, and genetic relationships. 

November Speaker Profile: Martha Fischer

Martha Fisher has been interested in birds her whole life. She learned how to spell 'ornithologist' in the 4th grade. Martha majored in Biology at the College of Wooster (nesting Prothonotary Warblers were within bicycling distance). After a detour for a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and Deafness and a ten year career in human services, she made a fortuitous move to Ithaca. A subsequent career change brought her to the Lab of Ornithology, where she has worked for the past 15 years. 

ORNITHOLOGY ASSOCIATION MEETING REPORT

BY KEVIN MCGOWAN

The 60th annual meeting of the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) took place October 5–7 in Batavia, New York. John Confer and I were Cayuga Bird Club delegates to the business meeting on Saturday. On Friday night attendees were treated to complementary cheese and chocolates before dinner and a presentation by the Messinger Woods wildlife rehabilitation center afterwards—the live owls were even more popular than the chocolates.

Meeting delegates went on an abbreviated field trip Saturday morning to the famous Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, home of the Eared Grebe. For some reason this western species appears there every winter while remaining uncommon-to-rare in the rest of the state. We found an unusually high count of five Eared Grebes. Species numbers were uncharacteristically low (so said the locals), but it was a pleasant morning, nonetheless. Non-delegates had a choice of morning field trips, including an extended visit to the plant and to the Iroquois/Oak Orchard/Tonawanda complex.

Delegates from NYSOA member organizations met to conduct the official business of the organization. In addition to hearing committee and financial reports, we elected officers (incoming president is Bill Ostrander from Elmira, well known by many Ithacans) and passed a much-discussed and debated resolution regarding wind power (see John Confer's article on page 6). The meeting ended with a short presentation by 15-year-old Hope Batcheller of Peterburgh, New York, about her desire to create a statewide club for young birders (see her article on this page). She was invited to present a proposal to the NYSOA Board of Directors at their next meeting.

After lunch, a series of talks were presented on some regional bird research. Subjects included the banding of Northern Saw-whet Owls, 70 years of results and trends from Buffalo Ornithological Society bird counts, orientation and navigation mechanisms in migratory birds at the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, migration and the interaction with man-made structures along the Buffalo waterfront, and post-breeding movements of Great Egrets from Motor Island. One of the most interesting was a presentation by Steven Eaton on the life of his father, Elon Howard Eaton, who wrote the monumental two volume *Birds of New York* in 1910 and 1914.

A reception and raffle entertained us before the banquet dinner. Afterward, Dr. Hector Galbraith gave a presentation on global climate change. Then Terry Yonker, one of the afternoon's speakers, gave a demonstration of his portable radar unit in the

YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB

BY HOPE BATCHELLER

Last November, I started an online Yahoo! group for young birders in New York State (NYS). Because young birders often feel isolated in a world of older birders, my initial goal was to encourage and connect them. Now that this group has been established for a while, we would like to expand it by starting a more formal club for kids aged 12 to 18. Not only would a club provide chances to meet, learn, and bird together, but it would help develop the next generation of naturalists.

I introduced this idea to NYSOA at the 2007 annual meeting and hope they will sponsor this club. In early November, I will be presenting a written proposal to the NYSOA board of directors.

For now, young birders are encouraged to join the NYS young birders email list (www.groups.yahoo.com/group/nysyoungbirders) and share their ideas about the club. I am hopeful that an official club will be established in the coming year. 🐦

parking lot. Terry tracks bird migration by radar, and despite the light overcast and drizzle, we managed to see the bright blips of a number of birds passing overhead, including several Common Loons. The meeting wrapped up with a Sunday morning field trip to the Niagara River.

NYSOA's objectives are to document the ornithology of New York State, to foster interest in and appreciation of birds, and to protect birds and their habitats. It publishes the quarterly journal *The Kingbird*, which includes regional sightings and articles of statewide interest, and the quarterly newsletter *New York Birders*. NYSOA's New York State Avian Records Committee maintains the state bird list. Although it is an association of member bird clubs, individual members are vital to its existence. Individual membership has been falling steadily over the years, and I am surprised at which local Ithacan birders do not belong. Are you interested in reading about new records for the state and seeing trends in bird movements and population levels? If so, then you should be a member. Individual memberships are \$22 annually, and you can join on the website (www.nybirds.org). The annual meetings are a great place to meet other birders, go birding, hear about research with birds, and talk about birds. Next year's meeting will be held in Rochester on September 19–21, 2008. See you there! 🐦

WIND POWER POSITION PAPER APPROVED

BY JOHN CONFER

The New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) supports an active Conservation Committee. Among many actions, the Conservation Committee frequently exchanges ideas, concerns, and observations between members and staff of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). Thus, NYSOA provides a mechanism for its members to obtain direct interaction with regulatory agencies in New York State.

In addition to several other activities, this year the Conservation Committee derived a Wind Power Position Paper that will be submitted to the DEC. Through this paper NYSOA advocates development of wind power at appropriate sites

because wind does relatively minimal damage to the environment compared to other electric energy sources for an equivalent amount of electric energy. The position paper raised particular concern about locations within two miles of the shore of the Great Lakes, of marine environments, and of the major rivers of New York and suggested that three years of surveys at such sites would be necessary to document minimal environmental damage at a site. The position paper recommends that environmental data collected at a site should be available to the public for analyses and that post-construction surveys should be conducted with results made available to the public. In so doing predictive models of wildlife

mortality can be derived and then applied to new proposals. Some delegates supported an amendment that suggested particular concern should be applied to all areas within five miles of major water bodies. This amendment was not passed perhaps because, as some said, this limit would be so restrictive that it would prohibit development of most wind energy for New York State.

As the vast scale of environmental damage from energy production becomes more apparent, such as human diseases, global warming, and acid rain, NYSOA has supported a resolution that will help reduce environmental damage and maintain our energy supplies. 🐦

FIELD TRIP REPORT: FALL MIGRANTS, SEPT. 23

BY MEENA HARIBAL

Seven people joined me for a trip to several local hotspots. We decided to start at Myers Point, but on the way I decided to stop at Bomax Road, where I was totally surprised to find a large housing complex. Nevertheless, we saw about 10 Wild Turkeys there.

At Myers we found about 10 Killdeer even though there were lots of people at the tip of the spit. On Salmon Creek there was a female Common Merganser with two well grown chicks further up the creek. There were six Green-winged Teal, which scooted up the stream when we scoped them. We watched the merganser put her head under water and look for fish. At one point she disappeared underwater for a few minutes and came up some 20 feet away. Other birds in the area included a pair of Belted Kingfishers, three Northern Flickers, three Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, a Carolina Wren, and a Magnolia Warbler that I spotted but that disappeared before anyone else could see it. On Salt Point we saw one more Carolina Wren, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, and a Sharp-shinned Hawk among other more common birds. We also observed Blue Jays, perhaps more than 100, migrating overhead. As we were leaving

Myers, we watched Turkey Vultures take to the air and rise on thermals. One of the trip participants, also spotted a peep flying overhead.

Next we headed to Stewart Park where it was very windy. On the algae mat along the shore, highlights included about 10 Greater Yellowlegs, one Lesser Yellowlegs, a few Killdeer, Green-winged Teals, and Coots. We were planning to go to the lighthouse woods, but based on the winds, we decided to head to Mount Pleasant instead.

As soon as we arrived at Mount Pleasant, we flushed a flock of more than 25 American Pipits, which circled over our heads and landed in the field in front of the observatory. We managed to see a few hawks, including a large raptor with long wings and tail that was all brownish. After getting it in the scope, we discovered that it was a juvenile Northern Goshawk. Later we saw three or four Cooper's Hawks, two Sharp-shinned Hawks, several Red-tailed Hawks, one Northern Harrier, and several Turkey Vultures. We also heard a few Horned Larks. Although it was supposed to be a full-day trip, I had to leave at noon, but some trip participants continued to watch birds on Mount Pleasant after I left. 🐦

FIELD TRIP REPORT: AROUND LAKE, SEPTEMBER 30

BY BOB MCGUIRE

Eight of us left the Lab of Ornithology shortly after 7:30 Sunday morning for an all-day jaunt around the lake. In addition to looking closely at some good birds, the main goal was to introduce folks to the great birding spots the area has to offer.

Our first stop was Stewart Park where we were able to study at close range Blue-winged Teal, Redhead, American Coot, and a single Lesser Scaup as well as a Lesser Yellowlegs. The spit at Myers was quiet, but we did get long looks at a circling Cooper's Hawk and were able to note the distinguishing features.

A quick stop at Lettie Cook Woods produced nothing but wet feet. We continued on to Mud Lock where the eagle's nest was empty and there was nothing on the water to speak of. But we were able to pick out several Common Moorhens along the reed beds to the southwest.


We found some waterfowl in the new shorebird habitat near the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center. We ended up walking back out the entrance road for close-up scope views of an American Golden-Plover, a dozen Pectoral Sandpipers, and both Greater and Lesser

yellowlegs. It was great to have both yellowlegs together to compare size and listen to the different calls.

From the tower, the open water in the Main Pool was distant, making scoping ducks less than satisfactory. While we were there, we watched several flocks of Canada Geese arrive, accompanied by a smattering of Snow Geese.

Tschache Pool was nearly devoid of bird life, and all Mays Pool held was a pair of Semipalmated Sandpipers. From the overlook at Knox-Marcellus Marsh, we watched three Northern Harriers.

Our last stop was Esker Brook Trail where we came across a small flock that included a Yellow-rumped Warbler, three Ruby-crowned Kinglets, and a Hermit Thrush. Present also were Downy, Hairy, and Pileated woodpeckers and several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers.

As we headed home via the Cayuga Lake Creamery, I asked folks what they considered the best sighting of the day and was surprised to hear that most considered it the Bald Eagles we had encountered at various spots. I have to remind myself that what has now become a common sight for me is really a magnificent bird! 

Club President Susan Danskin

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with thigh-high snow and that it took us five minutes to identify a flock of American Robins, I was hooked. We registered for Spring Field Ornithology that spring, and I've been avidly birding ever since.

3. HOW HAS YOUR INTEREST IN BIRDS GROWN AND EVOLVED?

One of the things I love about birding is that you never feel like you've learned everything there is to know. I loved my early days of birding when everything was brand new. I used to throw three or four field guides and my \$50 Bushnell binoculars into the car to head up to Montezuma. I was thrilled when I was able to identify ducks without the field guides. Then I realized that there were all these other birds that I had barely paid attention to: vireos, wrens, flycatchers, warblers, sparrows, etc. Early on, I discovered Monday Night Seminars and the Cayuga Bird Club (CBC). A CBC workshop on shorebirds introduced me to a whole new category of birding. A


CBC field trip to Niagara Falls spurred interest in gull identification. Every time I turned around there was a new bird to seek out and study. Now when I bird, the field guides and Bushnells have been replaced by an ipod and much better optics. The ipod has been of great value in my feeble attempts to bird by ear. While I am simply jealous of those who are better than I at visual identification, I am astounded and awed by those who have the ability to hear a chip note and identify the species. Most recently, I have become involved in the Montezuma Muckrace (a 24-hour fundraising competition) and The David Cup (a year-long Cayuga Lake Basin competition). For me, birding is the ideal lifelong learning experience.

4. WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE LOCAL BIRDING DESTINATIONS?

My favorite birding experiences are those when I start out early, head around the lake, and come home totally exhausted at the end of the day. The variety of habitats and diversity of species that one can encounter in a single day is always exciting. Of course, a stop at Pete's Treats or the

Cayuga Lake Creamery is always the perfect way to top off a fabulous day of birding.

5. WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE THE CLUB TO PURSUE OR ACCOMPLISH DURING YOUR TENURE?

My priority is for the club to continue to inspire new and young birders as it did me. The club has an outstanding group of individuals who volunteer their time as field trip leaders and occasionally workshop leaders. Despite Laura Stenzler's claims to the contrary, I have not led a field trip. I would like to remedy that by leading a trip this winter. I have always held back because I didn't feel as though I was an expert birder. Believe me, I still don't feel that way; however, I have realized that being an expert isn't a prerequisite to being a leader. One just needs a love of birding and a willingness to share that love and whatever knowledge one does possess. I would encourage others who have never led a trip to take the plunge with me and volunteer as well. The more volunteers we have, the more opportunities there will be for new and young birders to get out there. 

FIELD TRIP REPORT: LOCAL HOTSPOTS, OCTOBER 6

BY SHAWN BILLERMAN

Nick Sly and I led a small group on a half-day trip. We started at Sapsucker Woods where there was lots of activity, even if most of it was goldfinches, robins, starlings, and Red-winged Blackbirds. We were able to pick out some Rusty Blackbirds on the north portion of the Wilson Trail. Other birds we saw included Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Purple Finch, and White-crowned, White-throated, and Swamp sparrows.

Our next stop was Freese Road where we quickly located a Lincoln's Sparrow. Everyone got

a chance to see the bird, but it was a bit distant. We also found an Indigo Bunting and a Song Sparrow in addition to other sparrows. After hearing about an Orange-crowned Warbler on Bomax Road from other birders in the area, we headed there next, but we were unable to find the warbler.

We ended a relatively slow day at Stewart Park. There we found a pair of Surf Scoters, as well as American Wigeon, Pied-billed Grebe, and a group of Ruddy Ducks. 🦆

FIELD TRIP REPORT: LOCAL HOTSPOTS, OCTOBER 14

BY TOM JOHNSON

I was joined by Anne Mitchell, Susan Danskin, Bill Baker, and Bob McGuire (and Mike Harvey for part of the time). We met at Sapsucker Woods at 7:00 A.M. and headed up the east side of Cayuga Lake. We started at Myers Point, but apparently left just before Mickey Scilingo and Ken Rosenberg saw a Red-necked Phalarope there.

Continuing up the lake, the new impoundment at the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center held some nice shorebirds, most notably a juvenile Western Sandpiper and a juvenile White-rumped Sandpiper. While we were there, three Lapland Longspurs rattled overhead. We spotted a mostly alternate-plumaged drake Eurasian Wigeon in the northeast corner of the Main Pool along with thousands of other waterfowl, including the first Canvasbacks I had seen this fall in the basin.

We then met up with Mike Harvey at Marten's Tract north of Savannah to tromp around in the grass for sparrows and rails. Mike already had found an

Orange-crowned Warbler before we arrived, and with a bit of work everyone got nice views. Also very nice were the FOUR Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows that flushed from the fields near the parking lot. One

was the very first bird that popped up—from the field just beyond the gate in the parking lot.

A jaunt down Towpath Road yielded another Orange-crowned Warbler with a large flock of Dark-eyed Juncos and White-crowned Sparrows. The Savannah Mucklands were full of Savannah, Song, and White-crowned sparrows, but we could not turn up any longspurs or Vesper Sparrows.

On the way out of the Montezuma area, we made a quick stop at North Spring Pool and found a lovely juvenile tundra Peregrine Falcon and at least 20 Rusty Blackbirds.

The notables on the way down the lake were two White-winged Scoters off Cayuga Lake State Park (CLSP), a pack of 36 Pied-billed Grebes and 71 American Wigeon just south of CLSP, and some fantastic Cayuga Lake Creamery cones and shakes. 🦆



Tom Johnson

One of four Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows seen by trip participants at Marten's Tract.



Native Plants for Native Birds: *Acer rubrum* (Red Maple)

BY JOEL BAINES, PHOTOS BY DAVID RUPPERT

Red maple might be viewed as the hardy commoner in the maple family, with sugar maple representing the fragile aristocrat. Red maple, true to its commoner status, appears virtually anywhere there is enough moisture to support growth. It, in fact, boasts the widest range of any maple and can be found from Newfoundland to Eastern Texas. It also is significantly resistant to pollution and acid rain, unlike its pickier cousin. The wide variety of soil and water conditions throughout its range cause the trees to vary tremendously in form from site to site. In pure Ithaclay the tree remains rather spindly, whereas trees in good soil, such as that found in river bottoms, can become magnificent: as much as 80 feet tall and 50 feet wide when open-grown. Although their form varies, growth is gratifyingly rapid (expect one to two feet a year), especially when the trees are young. The trees usually live around 150 years, as opposed to sugar maples which can live twice as long.

Although the shape of the leaves are virtually identical between the two species, only red maple leaves have whitish undersides and orange to red leaf petioles. A hillside of red maple in early spring is a sight for winter weary eyes as the buds blush the landscape during the first breaths of spring. Warblers and other spring migrants are attracted to these buds, but I am unsure whether



they are inspecting the buds for insects or eating the buds themselves.

The trees also are excellent bird plants because they produce an annual crop of samaras. The remarkably effective design of these helicopter-like seeds allows their dispersal far from the tree given a good breeze, and it seems that any samara not eaten by Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkeys, Blue Jays, American Robins, finches, or a host of mammals sprouts at the forest floor. Some individuals are prolific samara producers whereas others nary seem to produce a seed; so planting multiple trees is recommended. Protection is required for anything shorter than the deer browsing line because deer in high pressure areas usually will mow the seedlings down as they appear. The trees should exceed the reach of deer in a few years.

Red maple is becoming more popular as a street tree because of its rapid early growth, resistance to pollution, and brilliant red color in autumn. There are cultivars that have highly reliable color (usually brilliant red), but I prefer the seed grown wild plants because their fall colors are inevitably beautiful and the variation makes a landscape more interesting. Local trees also will fare better in our climate and when propagated will ensure preservation of our local seed stock. 🐦

Lapland Longspur on Bluegrass Lane
(Cornell property in northeast Ithaca),
October 16, 2007.



Mark Chao

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Northern Gannets, Martha Fischer

NEXT MEETING NOVEMBER 12

MARTHA FISCHER, FEATURED SPEAKER

“RECORDING BIRDS IN NEWFOUNDLAND”

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