



Cayuga Bird Club

NEWSLETTER

ESTABLISHED 1914

NOVEMBER 2006

OFFICER ELECTIONS

BY LAURA STENZLER

At the November meeting, members of the Cayuga Bird Club will vote on a slate of officers for 2006–2007. The success of the club relies upon volunteers who are willing to share in the work of the club. This year we have several new people stepping up to help, in addition to those who continue offering their time and energy.

This year's slate of officers is as follows (nominations, with the approval of the nominee, also will be accepted from the floor at the November meeting):

President: Deirdre Anderson (second and final term, per club by-laws)

Vice-President: Laura Stenzler (continuing)

Treasurer: Kim Kline (continuing)

Recording Secretary: Susan Henderson

Corresponding Secretary: Ann Mitchell

Director: John Confer

Director: Kevin McGowan (one-year term replacing Mindy LaBranche who is stepping down early)

Non-elected positions filled by volunteers who have agreed to continue:

Newsletter Editor: Anne Marie Johnson

Publicity: Carol Felton Schmitt

Historian: Cindy Twardokus

Field Trip and Speaker Committee Chair: Ann Mitchell

Membership Committee Chair: Linda Clougherty

I Love Birding

BY ASHER HOCKETT

Do you enjoy birding? Do you love it? Most of us are members of the Cayuga Bird Club because we share this feeling. Birding is a wonderful pastime, accessible to everyone regardless of their skills, age, education, nationality, or challenges. Birding is really, really fun most of the time, and when it isn't, because there are few birds to be seen or the weather is abominable, it still gets us outside, out of our internal dialogue, and into harmony with nature.

I love to bird. In the spring when migration northward begins, I go to bed excited at the prospect of a morning full of warblers in the Hawthorn Orchard. The sound of Red-winged Blackbirds outside my window in the dawn greets me like an old friend I've longed to see again. Rain or shine, the world is smiling and my heart is filled with joy. Birding for me is, without a doubt, the best activity there is.


And birding is so much more. It has opened my eyes to the entire natural world. My thirst for knowledge and my awareness of nature have doubled and redoubled many times since I began to bird.

I first visited the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Lyman Stuart Observatory nearly 50 years ago, and I remember gazing through an absolutely humongous pair of Bausch and Lomb tripod-mounted binoculars at the ducks and geese, chickadees, and other then-un-

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MEMBERSHIP DUES CHANGE

BY LAURA STENZLER

At the September Cayuga Bird Club meeting, Deirdre Anderson proposed raising the yearly dues for families from \$10.00 to \$15.00 and instituting a new student membership rate of \$10.00. At the October meeting the proposal was discussed, voted on, and passed. The increase in dues will allow the club to meet a growing number of expenses, including the yearly fee for insurance. The change in dues is effective immediately. However, members who have already paid \$10.00 for this year are "grandfathered in," which means they do not have to pay the difference this year (although donations are gladly accepted!). 

CAYUGA BIRD CLUB

Officers and Contacts

Deirdre Anderson, President
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Laura Stenzler, Vice President
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Kim Kline, Treasurer
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Field Trip and Speaker Committee

Ann Mitchell, chair
Alm9413@aol.com • 277-2926

Deirdre Anderson, Gladys Birdsall, Linda Clougherty, Meena Haribal, Bob McGuire, Laura Stenzler, Kevin McGowan

Directors (term expiration dates)

David Gooding (2006)
dag25@cornell.edu • 277-3598

Mindy LaBranche (2007)
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Bard Prentiss (2008)
prentissb@frontiernet.net • 844-4691

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 per family (\$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

ORNITHOLOGY ASSOCIATION MEETING REPORT

BY JOHN CONFER

What do you know about the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) and its importance to you, to our club, and to birding in New York? NYSOA is the lead organization that sponsors most state-wide birding activities. Without NYSOA, there would be no coordination of birding for New York State. NYSOA sponsored and compiled the first Atlas of the Breeding Birds of New York and now Atlas 2000, which is nearing completion. The state's Department of Environmental Conservation contributed money and personnel to the atlas projects, but members of NYSOA contributed the field work and most of the administrative time and effort. Without NYSOA, we would not know where birds have occurred in New York State. NYSOA supervises the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC), which verifies when details of a rare sighting are sufficient to virtually guarantee a correct identification. NYSOA and NYSARC determine the official Checklist of the Birds of New York, annotated with the seasonal status for each species. NYSOA's publication, *The Kingbird*, provides a seasonal summary of bird observations and articles about bird research by both amateurs and professionals in New York. *New York Birders*, another NYSOA publication, provides a more folksy description of activities by the 50+ member clubs.

NYSOA also sponsors the annual meeting that is hosted by a member club and provides a Lillian Stoner Award to students for attending the meeting. This year the meeting was held in Oneonta on the State University of New York College at Oneonta campus, near the Franklin Mountain Hawkwatch, the destination of one of the field trips during the meeting. Matt Podolsky was nominated by our club for the Lillian Stoner Award and received one of the awards given out this year. At the paper session of the meeting, Matt presented an analysis of the effects on forest birds of the creation of shrubland habitat. The speaker at this year's banquet was Don Kroodsman, whose talk was really exceptionally informative and entertaining.

The Cayuga Bird Club is a member club of NYSOA, which entitles us to send voting delegates to the annual business meeting and nominate students for awards. Individuals can join NYSOA and get *The Kingbird* and *New York Birders*. Next year's meeting in late September will be hosted by several bird clubs and naturalist organizations from the Buffalo area. Field trips will be provided to Oak Orchard Wildlife Refuge and Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. Anyone is welcome to attend. 

Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
NOV. 5 Sunday 8:00 A.M.– 4:00 P.M.	Field Trip: Montezuma Leader: Bob McGuire Meet: Johnson Center*	Bob will lead an all day trip to the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge to look for waterfowl and other birds. Bring lunch and snacks. Dress appropriately. Contact Bob at <rss@lightlink.com> or at 256-0460 with questions.
NOV. 6 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: David N. Kitler	The Harpy Eagle, one of the most powerful birds of prey in the world, which once ranged from Mexico to Argentina, has disappeared almost entirely due to hunting and loss of habitat. During his presentation, "Observing and Portraying the Harpy Eagle and its Habitat," nature artist David N. Kitler, of Worldwide Nature Artists Group (WNAG), will take the audience to the jungles of Panama where David observed and gathered reference material on this amazing raptor and its habitat.
NOV. 11 Saturday 6:30 A.M. (Rain date Nov. 12)	Field Trip: Loon Watch Leader: Bob Meade Meet: Cass Park or Taughannock Park	Meet Ann Mitchell at Cass Park at 6:30 A.M. to carpool, or meet Bob at Taughannock Park at dawn (approximately 6:45 A.M.) for a morning of counting migrating loons. There will be warm cider and donuts. Dress for the weather. If you need directions or if you would like to carpool, contact Ann Mitchell at 277-2926 or at <alm9413@aol.com>. Rain date is Sunday, November 12.
NOV. 13 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Andrew Hendry	"Darwin's Finches of the Galapagos Islands." See speaker profile on page 4 for details.
NOV. 18 Saturday 8:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Local birds Leader: Gladys Birdsall Meet: Johnson Center*	Join Gladys for this half day trip to look for local birds, returning by noon. Dress for the weather. For information call Gladys at 257-0130 or at <gjb5@cornell.edu>.
NOV. 20 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Andrew Farnsworth	Many birds produce distinctive flight calls, especially during nocturnal migration. These relatively short, generally high frequency, and occasionally identification-defying vocalizations are of broad interest to birders, ornithologists, and conservationists. However, there are numerous gaps in our understanding of these calls. In his presentation, "Perspectives on Function, Evolution, and Ecology of Flight Calls," Andrew Farnsworth, Ph.D. candidate at Cornell University, will discuss flight call research, highlighting his research on flight calls in wood-warblers.
NOV. 20 Monday	Newsletter deadline	Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
DEC. 2-3 Saturday– Sunday	Field Trip: Niagara Falls Leader: Kevin McGowan	Kevin will lead a two-day trip to Niagara Falls, Canada, to look for gulls. Contact him at <kjm2@cornell.edu> or at 254-2432 to reserve a space and for details about when and where to meet and what to bring.
DEC. 4 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Jeremy Coleman	In his presentation, "Foraging Effort and Diving Behavior of Double-crested Cormorants at Three New York Colonies," Jeremy Coleman, doctoral candidate in the New York Cooperative Research Unit of the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University, will discuss cormorant foraging behavior observed during his research on breeding Double-crested Cormorants from Oneida Lake, Lake Ontario, and Lake Champlain. He also will describe previously unknown details about cormorants in their underwater world that were gathered using innovative electronic time-depth recorders.

Events Calendar continued

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
DEC. 11 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Kevin J. McGowan	Although bird distributions seem static, in fact they are very dynamic. New York is the first state to complete two Breeding Bird Atlas projects (1980–1985 and 2000–2005), and these two data sets allow investigation of changes over a 20-year period in the distributions of more than 250 species breeding in the state. In his presentation, “New York’s Second Breeding Bird Atlas: 20 years of Change,” Kevin McGowan will discuss the results of the second Atlas and will show examples of maps and art that will be used in the new book that he is co-editing, due out in 2008.


*Meet for field trips in the front parking lot.

October Speaker Profile: Andrew Hendry

Darwin’s finches of the Galapagos Islands are an icon of evolution, appearing in all text books on evolutionary biology. These birds were pivotal in the origin of Darwin’s evolutionary ideas and have since yielded many additional insights.

The Galapagos originated through volcanic activity several million years ago. Some time later, a finch ancestor colonized the islands and diversified into 14 recognized species. These species are remarkable in their specialization on different food types, particularly with regard to the size and shape of their beaks. Indeed, some finch species are so different from one another that Darwin originally thought they were related to grosbeaks, blackbirds, finches, warblers, and wrens. This resource-based adaptive radiation

is one of the best examples of how natural selection can drive the evolution of biological diversity.

Andrew Hendry studies evolutionary processes in natural populations. He was appointed assistant professor in the Redpath Museum and Department of Biology at McGill University in 2002. Since that time, Andrew has been studying Darwin’s finches and spending at least a month each year in the Galapagos. His work on finches focuses on how natural selection can cause speciation. Andrew will describe the Galapagos Islands and its unique residents, summarize the finch radiation, provide some insights into evolutionary processes, and discuss his ongoing research. 


FIELD TRIP REPORT: FRANKLIN MOUNTAIN, OCTOBER 7

BY LINDA CLOUGHERTY

It’s a beautiful thing, what brilliant sunshine in a deep blue sky can do with the inherent beauty of an American Kestrel right overhead. This particular bird looked almost translucent to me as it circled above the birders gathered at Franklin Mountain for a day of counting birds migrating south. The kestrel was fairly low overhead making the feather colors sharp and clear. And the atmospheric conditions enhanced those colors. It was the best sighting of the day, to me anyway!

The planned trip to Hawk Mountain attracted a good number of birders, originally, but by Saturday, October 7, only three remained committed to making the trip. The weather forecast predicted conditions that made a heavy hawk migration questionable. So the trip to Hawk Mountain became a trip to Franklin Mountain. We arrived around 10:30 A.M. and spent about four hours on the mountain overlooking Oneonta and the land beyond.

It was a spectacular day weather-wise. We strained to be the first to see the specks in the distance, hoping that those specks would make their way to Franklin Mountain. Some did, but most found their way south by a different route. We did see quite a few Turkey Vultures; Red-tailed, Coopers and Sharp-shinned hawks; and one Osprey. The hoped for first Golden Eagle of the year did not appear, although a Red-tailed Hawk did a pretty good imitation of an eagle for awhile. The nearby feeders attracted Black-capped Chickadees, White-breasted Nuthatches, and newly-arrived White-throated Sparrows. American Robins, Blue Jays, American Crows, and Common Ravens were also present.

It was truly a lovely autumn day, and we enjoyed spending a part of it with a few other birders and a few birds going south (90 for the day). 

MINUTES: CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING

OCTOBER 9, 2006

BY LINDA CLOUGHERTY

Laura Stenzler, Vice President, welcomed the members of the audience and offered an opportunity for visitors to identify themselves. She passed copies of the current newsletter to them. Linda Clougherty was thanked for bringing the cookies. Kevin McGowan will provide them at the November meeting.

RECENT SIGHTINGS

- Many sparrows including White-crowned and White-throated sparrows
- a pair of Winter Wrens
- Ruby-crowned Kinglets
- many Yellow-rumped Warblers
- a Northern Saw-whet Owl at Monkey Run

OLD BUSINESS

- Laura explained the current status of the Club's efforts to become a 501(c)(3) organization. An amendment to the Club's by-laws must be made that states that in the event the Cayuga Bird Club dissolves, remaining assets of the club will be transferred to another 501(c)(3) organization. The amendment will be printed in the November newsletter and mailed to arrive at least ten days prior to the November meeting, as required by New York State law. The amendment will be voted on at the November meeting.
- John Confer gave a report on the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) meeting held in September in Oneonta. He also explained the history, functions, and benefits of the organization. John served as the delegate from the Cayuga Bird Club. He told the group that the Club's nominee for the Lillian Stoner Award, Matt Podolsky, was honored with the award. Two other students also received the cash award, which enabled all of them to attend the conference. Bob McGuire attended the meeting and reported that the keynote speaker, Don Kroodsma, was fantastic. Don is the author of *The Singing Life of Birds*.
- Laura stated that election of club officers will take place at the November meeting. Deirdre Anderson, President; Laura Stenzler, Vice President; and Kim Kline, Treasurer, all agreed to run for their respective offices again. Susan Henderson was nominated for Recording Secretary and Ann Mitchell was nominated for Corresponding Secretary. Laura encouraged members to consider offering their services to the club since it doesn't

require a great deal of effort or time and is necessary to maintain the operation and activities of the club.

- Kim Kline gave the Treasurer's Report, listing sources of income, itemized expenses, and fund balances. (See report in October issue of the Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter for details.) She noted that the club saved a little over \$100 last year.
- Laura opened the floor for discussion of the proposal made at the September meeting by Deirdre Anderson to raise the dues for non-student members by \$5 a year. Some comments during the discussion:
 - ▶ members may prefer to make donations, which would be tax deductible, rather than pay higher dues, which may not be deductible
 - ▶ it is better to have a project in mind when asking for more money, especially since there is currently a fairly large reserve
 - ▶ having a substantial pool of money makes it easier to come up with projects
 - ▶ put a line for donations on the membership form
 - ▶ create levels of membership such as sustaining membership (ongoing support for operation of organization) and contributing membership (provides additional funds for new projects), etc.
 - ▶ the club has many expenses now paid for by individuals. If all the expenses budgeted by the club had been incurred (such as expenses for delegates to attend the NYSOA conference or expenses for taking speakers to dinner), the club would have lost money last year, and next year we plan to print brochures.
 - ▶ an organization needs to be "budget-conscious" and only budget for expenses that the budgeted income can cover.

A vote by hands was taken, and an increase of \$5 per year (for a new rate of \$15) for family membership, with a student rate of \$10 and free life membership for long-time members, passed unanimously with one abstention. The new rate became effective immediately.

NEW BUSINESS

Stephen Wagner and Mary Plowe, members of Save Sapsucker Woods, gave a short presentation on the

MINUTES

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organization, asking club members to look at their website and consider their petition asking the Ithaca Town Planning Board to reconsider allowing the development of a new subdivision next to the Lab of Ornithology's property. They are hosting a meeting on Wednesday, October 1, at 7:00 P.M. at the First Congregational Church at 309 Highland Road.

Susan Danskin read the Basin List.

Laura introduced the evening's speaker, Richard Marx, who presented "Purple Martins: History, Lives, Housing, and More." This lecture gave many suggestions that the club can use with the martin houses at Myers Point. 🐦

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CAYUGA BIRD CLUB, INC.

Notice is hereby given that the proposed amendments to the Certificate of Incorporation (below) be submitted to a vote at the regular meeting of members having voting rights. Such meeting is to be held at the Auditorium of the Johnson Center at 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, New York, on November 13, 2006, at 7:30 P.M.

CERTIFICATE OF AMENDMENT OF THE CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION

of

THE CAYUGA BIRD CLUB, INC.

Under Section 803 of the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law

The undersigned, the President and Treasurer of The Cayuga Bird Club, Inc., do hereby state:

1. The name of the corporation is The Cayuga Bird Club, Inc.
2. The certificate of incorporation of The Cayuga Bird Club, Inc. was filed by the Department of State on the 24th day of April, 1914, and amended by Certificate of Amendment filed by the Department of State on November 13, 1984. The said corporation was formed under the Membership Corporation Law of the State of New York.
3. The Cayuga Bird Club, Inc. is a corporation as defined in subparagraph (a)(5) of Section 102 of the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law and is a Type B corporation under section 201 of said law.
4. The Secretary of State of the State of New York is hereby designated the agent of the corporation upon whom process against it may be served. The post office address to which the Secretary of State shall mail a copy of any process against the corporation served upon him as agent of the corporation is

159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, New York 14850

5. The Certificate of Incorporation of The Cayuga Bird Club, Inc., is hereby amended as follows:

Previous number Seventh will read:

No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, director, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distribution in furtherance of its purposes as set forth in its certificate of incorporation.

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CERTIFICATE OF AMENDMENT OF THE CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

A new number Ninth will read:

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation is organized exclusively for one or more of the purposes, as specified in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws and shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on by (a) a corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code, or (b) by a corporation, contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

A new number Tenth will read:

No substantial part of the activities of the corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation (except as otherwise provided by Internal Revenue Code Section 501(h), and the corporation shall not participate in, or intervene (including the publication or distributions of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate, or participating in, or intervening in (including the publication or distribution of statements), any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

A new number Eleventh will read:

In the event of dissolution, all of the remaining assets and property of the corporation shall after necessary expenses thereof be distributed to another organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, or corresponding provisions of any subsequent Federal tax laws, or to the Federal government, or state or local government for a public purpose upon approval of a Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of New York.

6. This amendment to the Certificate of Incorporation of The Cayuga Bird Club, Inc. was authorized by the concurring vote of a majority of the members of said corporation present at a regular meeting with notice of these amendments duly given pursuant to Section 605 of the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law held on _____, 2006, the affirmative vote of which constituted a quorum.
7. No approvals or consents are required by the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law or any other statute of the State of New York.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned have made, subscribed and acknowledged this Certificate this _____ day of _____, 2006.

President

Treasurer

Deirdre Anderson

Kim Kline

Address:

Address:

I Love Birding

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named birds while I listened to the curious sounds piped in from outside. I returned often to look through those binoculars, and when they were occupied I looked at the paintings on the walls and marveled that there could be such beautiful creatures anywhere.

Over the years since, I have observed nesting albatrosses on Midway Island in the Navy and Red-headed Woodpeckers living in a cactus cavity in my front yard in Florida. Yet my interest in birds lay mostly dormant until 2002 when my co-worker and friend Jon Kloppel suggested I join the email list, Cayugabirds-L. I remember some of my first posts, such as one about a Spruce Grouse I thought I saw on Comfort Road. Boy did I hear about that! If I only had known how unlikely such a sighting was, I would have paid a lot more attention to the bird, which calmly and unshyly clucked away at my feet as I got out of the car for a better look. I followed it around the end of a hedgerow for at least a minute—a birding eon—before it grew impatient with my attention and fled into the brush. To this day I cannot rule out a Spruce Grouse, but its slot remains unchecked on my list. Meanwhile I have learned what field marks are and how to observe them.

Soon after, another friend and co-worker (what a great job I have!), Leslie Connors, brought me a flyer for Spring Field Ornithology and urged me to sign up. I was hooked by Steve Kress' Wednesday evening lectures. I took the class for three years, tromping around local spots on Saturday mornings with various leaders, Friday night sleep still in my eyes, until soon it became difficult to sleep in on weekend mornings. It was a new beginning for for me—the vehicle for a voyage of personal discovery.

Then in 2005, on Sapsucker Woods Road one August morning, I met another birder, Ann Mitchell, and as we ambled through the woods pointing out birds to one another, she asked me if I would like to join her team for the Montezuma Muckrace. At the beginning of that year I had birded the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge with Jon Van Neil for the annual Christmas Bird Count, a stroke of good fortune because few know the place as well as he does. Jon mentioned that I should have been there in September for the Muckrace because there were really some great birds to be seen then, and it was a lot warmer too! With Ann's invitation I remembered that remark, and soon after I agreed to go with her, Meena Haribal, and Linda Clougherty as one of the Cayuga Bird Club Mudhens (a non-gender specific



Asher Hockett

Evening Grosbeaks and a Blue Jay on Hammond Hill, January 10, 2006.

term, by the way). There was one condition: in order for the club to sponsor me, I had to join. So join I did.

If you look around the auditorium on meeting night, you will notice that none of the seats are occupied by birds. Well, duh, you say! But think about it for a moment. What brings us together is birds and birding, but what we are is something else entirely. More than just birders, we are members of one of the oldest birding clubs in the country. Founded by, among others, Louis Aggasiz Fuertes (the artist whose works line the walls of the Johnson Center and punctuated my childhood visits to the former building), the Cayuga Bird Club is the only birding club that has the honor of meeting on what, for American birders, is hallowed ground. It is a truly special place, and the club is truly unique, with members from the heights of ornithological endeavor as well as all other walks of life.

Now I often meet people I know from the club in the sometimes distant reaches of the region, and regularly it is one of those folks who points out the rare bird I am seeking. As a sporting endeavor birding is unique in that everyone is happy to share their discoveries with other birders. You won't find that spirit in other outdoor ventures like fishing, hunting, or mushroom picking. Because we birders take nothing away from the environment while pursuing our pastime, our targets remain available to the next person who happens by.

And one final benefit of birding is that walking over often steep hills or difficult terrain comes almost unconsciously; for while engaged in observing birds and the natural environment that hosts them, we almost forget to be tired from the physical effort expended in the process. And sleep, when it comes later, is better because of the activity and the fresh air. In dreams of the beautiful creatures seen in the day, if you are lucky, you may even get a chance to fly with them. 🐦



Native Plants for Native Birds: Silphium perfoliatum (Cupplant)

BY JOEL BAINES, PHOTO BY DAVID RUPPERT

William Cullina of the New England Wildflower society, in his highly recommended book, *Growing and Propagating the Wildflowers of the United States and Canada* (Houghton Mifflin, 2000), imagines an undefeatable midsummer basketball team called the Big Yellow Daisies. If there were such a team, a member of the Silphiums (or Rosinweeds) would no doubt play power center, Shaquille O'Neal-style. These plants are big, standing well over eight feet high. They originally accumulated in clearings and flood plains in our area and in the famous tall grass prairies of the upper Midwest. Cupplant (*Silphium perfoliatum*) is relatively uncommon in our wild areas, but it is a special favorite in the Cornell Plantations. For example, a large stand is located on the southern slope of the bowl near the fish pond, forming a glorious yellow fortress-like wall with hundreds of flowers perched high up on individual stems. In the fall and winter, the yellow (or maybe olive) on this hillside comes from the numerous American Goldfinches feeding on the seeds.

This is one imposing plant. The foliage is coarse with two triangular leaves fused into one, and the fusion of these leaves is penetrated by the stem (hence the moniker perfoliatum). The fused leaves produce a cup-like contraption that accumulates water after a rain, and I have seen American Goldfinches and Song Sparrows drinking from the little caches as they alternately dine on the seeds. There are also a few interesting brightly colored leaf hoppers that I have not seen anywhere else except in these cupplant watering holes.

The numerous rays of each flower are long and thin, with the subsequent seed heads appearing rather small and demure relative to the plant; they are even smaller than the seed heads of other daisies like *Rudbeckia* sp. Although each flower does not last long, they appear sequentially on the high stems throughout the bloom period



producing a total of about three weeks of bright yellow bloom.

Cupplant is almost impossible to remove without herbicides; so when you plant it, make sure it is in the right spot. Part of this endurance comes from prolific self-seeding and the fact that it is a prairie plant, adapted to a hard life with extended periods of drought, fire, wind, and temperatures that range from sub zero to well over 100°F. The tap root (like many plants from this ecosystem) can approach 20 feet in length, providing both water and substantial energy reserve. Thus, once established, cupplant is fire and drought resistant and long lived. Entire plants can be moved when substantial root is transplanted with the plant.

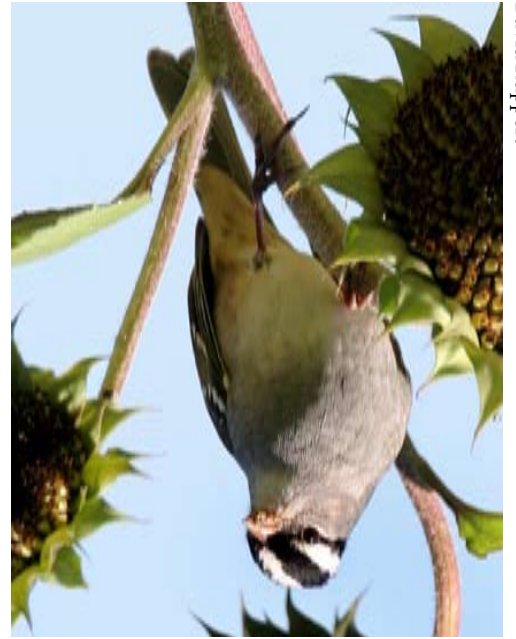
The literature generally states that young plants require substantial moisture for establishment, but I have found cupplant to be quite tolerant of drought. For example, in June 2005 I planted a 6-inch seedling into a well-drained sandy loam and then promptly forgot about it, only watering once or twice during the entire summer. Despite the lack of rain and attention, the plant survived, although it did not put on much height (presumably the root was its focus). The following season, it shot up to 10 feet in height and set its first blooms.

Plant in good garden soil in a sunny or partially sunny location. Cupplant is only moderately deer resistant, and our ungulate comrades will top it when given a chance. It is one of the few herbaceous plants that grows above the reach of deer, and they do not seem to think to knock it down, so deer protection

earlier in the season should be enough. Be sure to plant normal sized plants or grasses (purple coneflower and switchgrass are excellent choices) in front of Cupplant to hide the rather leggy-looking stems. Or put smaller daisies in front, and let cupplant tower above them. Cupplant vs Shaq? If the former had a nervous system, it would be close. 🐦

White-crowned Sparrow in the gardens on
Ereese Road, October 9, 2006.

David Ruppert



CAYUGA BIRD CLUB
c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Rd.
Ithaca, NY 14850



Iguana Finch and its namesake by Andrew Hendry



NEXT MEETING NOVEMBER 13

ANDREW HENDRY, FEATURED SPEAKER

“DARWIN’S FINCHES OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS”

SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS

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