



Cayuga Bird Club NEWSLETTER

ESTABLISHED 1914

OCTOBER 2008

Magnificent Frigatebird: A Cayuga Lake Basin Record

BY SHAWN BILLERMAN

On Sunday, September 21, Tom Johnson and I drove back toward Ithaca after a weekend in Rochester attending the New York State Ornithological Association's 60th meeting. We decided to take a slower, longer route back to Ithaca, birding along the way. After a stop at Mont-

ezuma National Wildlife Refuge and before driving the final 10 miles home, we stopped at

frigatebird before it left the tree in the Jetty Woods where observers had seen it roost the night before. As the light grew brighter, it became painfully clear that the bird was no



Magnificent Frigatebird



Kevin McGowan watches the frigatebird above the lighthouse at Myers Point.

Myers Point, hoping there would be at least something there. We were not disappointed. Before I even was able to get out of the car, I was jolted by the shouts of "FRIGATEBIRD!! MAGNIFICENT FRIGATEBIRD!!" As I scrambled from the car, an adult male Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*) glided slowly over our heads, no more than 30-40 feet up, with a few Ring-billed Gulls. This bird certainly seemed out of place amongst the puny gulls, with its velvet black plumage, scarlet red throat pouch, seven-foot wingspan, and long forked tail. But there it was, drifting easily northward, right into a north wind. Between watching and taking pictures, we started the phone chain, calling every birder in the area that we could. The bird was eventually seen by many birders that afternoon and evening from several vantage points as it glided around the south end of the lake.

On the morning of September 22, a group of birders gathered anxiously at Alan H. Treman Marine State Park before dawn, hoping to see the

longer sitting in its roost tree. Jeff Gerbracht was the first to notice a dark lump on the shore under the tree. He and several other birders headed over to the Jetty Woods where they found that the dark lump was the Magnificent Frigatebird, which apparently had died overnight. Jeff brought the bird to the Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates, where it will be prepared as a study specimen.

Although speculative, many hypothesized that this Magnificent Frigatebird was blown off-course by Hurricane Ike, which hit the Gulf Coast of Texas on September 13. No substantial records were recorded after the passage of the storm, but the hurricane was known to displace several Magnificent Frigatebirds to inland Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas. The frigatebird on Cayuga Lake probably was swept up with the storm and drifted around the interior of the country, trying to return to the coast. This hypothesis is made more likely by reports of two frigatebirds in Pennsylvania and one in Michigan the previous day, as well as a frigatebird seen near Cleveland,

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Tom Johnson

Shawn Billerman

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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, duck silhouette by Lena Samsonenko.

Visit the Cayuga Bird Club website at:
WWW.BIRDS.CORNELL.EDU/CAYUGABIRDCLUB

From the President

As usual, up until a few minutes ago, I stared down the face of this column without a good story to tell. I had prepared an informative, albeit boring, blurb on the status of volunteerism in the club (see later paragraphs) but was disappointed that I didn't have something funny or profound or at least interesting to share.



(Weird dreams: plenty. Weird dreams involving birds: none. Great ideas for a president's column: priceless.) Then inspiration struck. Unfortunately, it wasn't of the "funny" or the "at least interesting" variety. It definitely tended toward the more profound.

Yesterday, I had what I considered at the time to be the extreme good fortune to observe a Magnificent Frigatebird flying above the south end of Cayuga Lake. That good fortune came with a steep price. Along with plenty of other birders, I dropped everything to race out to see the bird, but the loss of time that should have been devoted to other tasks wasn't the price paid. I sped halfway to Myers, turned back to Stewart Park, and then returned to Myers later, but the cost of gas and emissions wasn't the price paid. The real price paid was the life of this truly "magnificent" bird.

Opening my email this morning, I was faced with the subject line "Frigatebird found dead." I guess I knew this was a possibility, but I had high hopes for its survival. At one point while watching the bird, I questioned Dave Nutter about the chances of the bird making it back to the coast. We talked about how it might have arrived here and where it might go next, but we sort of skirted around the most likely outcome. The emails this morning opened my eyes to reality.

I have to say that I am feeling more than a little guilty about my excitement at seeing this "first ever" bird in the Cayuga Lake Basin. There is a reason it is a "first ever" bird; it doesn't belong here, and being here is not a good predictor for its future.

So the next time that a call goes out about a rarity, will I be as quick to respond? If I am being truly honest, I have to say yes. The excitement I experienced when first spotting this bird, the awe I felt while watching its powerful flight, and the amusement I sensed when a fellow birder quipped, "Where is that pterodactyl?" are all feelings that I will remember and cherish for a long time. But I will also remember and cherish the bird that gave its life in exchange for my enjoyment. Next time I'll approach the entire experience with a stronger reverence for the price being paid.

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Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
OCT. 4 Saturday 7:30 A.M.	Field Trip: Local Hotspots Leader: Ryan Douglas Meet: Johnson Center*	This half-day trip will travel to local hotspots. Dress for the weather and bring a snack. Contact Ryan at 229-6438 or at <commonloon@gmail.com> with questions.
OCT. 6 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Chris Norment	Chris Norment, Professor at the College at Brockport, State University of New York, researched Harris's Sparrows at Warden's Grove in the Canadian Arctic for his doctoral dissertation. His presentation, "Return to Warden's Grove: Science, Desire, and the Lives of Harris's Sparrows," will include a reading from his new book, <i>Return to Warden's Grove</i> . Chris will discuss the basic natural history and ecology of Harris's Sparrows, the difficulties and pleasures of conducting ornithological research in an isolated wilderness setting, and what might be called the "aesthetics" of basic scientific research.
OCT. 12 Sunday 7:30 A.M.	Field Trip: Cayuga Lake Leader: Bob McGuire Meet: Johnson Center*	Join Bob for this all day trip around the lake. Brings snacks and money to buy food. Dress appropriately for the weather. Contact Bob for details at <boju@lightlink.com> or at 256-0460.
OCT. 13 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Andrea Townsend	Andrea Townsend will present "The Secret Sex lives of American Crows," based on her research with local crow populations. Although the cooperatively breeding crows of Ithaca appear socially monogamous, their mating system is not so straightforward (and can seem downright lascivious!). Andrea will talk about the patterns and consequences of mating decisions in American Crows and about conflict between the sexes. See speaker profile on page 7 for more information.
OCT. 18 Saturday 7:30 A.M.	Field Trip: Local Hotspots Leader: Tom Johnson Meet: Johnson Center*	Tom will lead this all day trip to where birds are being seen. Dress appropriately and bring snacks and food. Contact Tom for details at <tbj4@cornell.edu> or at (717) 991-5727.
OCT. 19 Sunday 8:30 A.M.– 10:30 A.M.	Field Trip: Kid's Trip Leader: Mark Chao Meet: Johnson Center*	This special field trip for kids (ages 6 through 12) will emphasize identification and enjoyment of common birds, as well as use of birding optics. We probably will visit Sapsucker Woods and Stewart Park. No prior birding experience is necessary. Group size will be limited to fifteen kids. PREREGISTRATION IS REQUIRED. To preregister, contact Mark Chao at <markchao@imt.org> or at 257-3348 by October 17. All children must be accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult for the entire field trip. Bring your own binoculars and a snack, if desired.
OCT. 20 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Marie Read	For the past two summers, acclaimed wildlife photographer Marie Read has photographed the lives of Black Terns in the secluded marshes of Upstate New York. Marie will talk about these beautiful and threatened birds, as well as the other creatures that share their wetland home, through her stunning photographs in her presentation, "One Good Tern—photographic adventures with Black Terns."
OCT. 20 Monday	Newsletter deadline	Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
OCT. 26 Sunday 7:30 A.M.	Field Trip: Local Hotspots Leader: Bill Baker Meet: Johnson Center*	Join Bill for this half day trip to where birds are being seen. Dress appropriately. Contact Bill for details at <billbaker@lightlink.com> or at 275-0540.

Events Calendar continued

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
OCT. 27 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Nathan Senner and Eric Liner	Nathan Senner, a doctoral student at Cornell, has been researching Hudsonian Godwits in Chile as part of the Pacific Shorebird Migration Project (PSMP). In their presentation, "Tracking the Elusive Hudsonian Godwit," Nathan will talk about how his work in Chile fits in with the goals of the PSMP, and Eric Liner, a Video Production Engineer at the Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library, will introduce a high definition video of Nathan's work.
NOV. 2 Sunday 8:00 A.M.	Field Trip: Cayuga Lake Leader: Susan Danskin Meet: Johnson Center*	Join Susan for an all day trip around the lake. Bring snacks and lunch. Contact Susan for details at <danskin@twcny.rr.com> or at 277-2622.
NOV. 3 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Rob Cahill	Rob's work focuses on avian habitat conservation and reforestation in the villages surrounding the last great cloud forests of Guatemala: the Sierra Yalijux. This mountain range is home to the densest population of the Resplendent Quetzals in Mesoamerica. In his presentation, "Cloud Forest Conservation in Guatemala," Rob will discuss the work of Proeval Raxmu, a conservation organization in Guatemala, and their ongoing bird monitoring program that uses observations by local Maya farmers.
NOV. 10 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Martha Fisher	Martha Fischer, Audio Archivist in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library, will present "Birds of the High Arctic." Sanderlings, Purple Sandpipers, and White-rumped Sandpipers were the hot targets for an expedition to the Canadian High Arctic. Gerrit Vyn (photographer and audio production engineer at Macaulay) and Martha took their microphones to Bathurst Island to record these and other birds. Martha will show sights and sounds from the land of the midnight sun.

*Meet for field trips in the front parking lot.

Magnificent Frigatebird

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Tom Johnson

Ohio, on September 16.

Magnificent Frigatebird is one of five species in the family Fregatidae. Similar looking Lesser Frigatebird (*F. ariel*) and Greater Frigatebird (*F. minor*) also have been documented in North America, making careful observation necessary for identification.

Magnificent Frigatebird is found mainly in tropical and subtropical oceans. It breeds off

the west coast of Mexico from Baja California south to coastal Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands, and on the Atlantic from the Dry Tortugas (only U.S. breeding site) south along the coast of Mexico, Central America, northern South America, and Brazil. Non-breeding birds are found regularly along the coast in Florida and the Gulf of Mexico from Florida to Texas, with vagrants moving farther up the coast (Diamond and Schreiber 2002).

In New York, Magnificent Frigatebird is a rare vagrant. Bull (1998) lists 18 records of frigatebird in the state, with only one previous record from inland New York, found at Derby Hill in September of 1990. Since 1998, there have been at least 3 additional sightings of Magnificent Frigatebird, all in

Suffolk County (in 2003, 2007, and most recently on September 7, 2008, at Moriches Inlet after Tropical Storm Hanna). Elsewhere in the Northeast, there are at least 7 records of frigatebird from New Jersey, 3 from Connecticut, 11 from Massachusetts, and 1 accepted record from Pennsylvania (McWilliams and Brauning 2000). 🐦

References:

- Diamond, A.W. and E.A. Schreiber. 2002. Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology.
- McWilliams, G.M. and D.W. Brauning. 2000. *The Birds of Pennsylvania*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.
- Levine, E. (ed.). 1998. *Bull's Birds of New York State*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY.

MINUTES: CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING

SEPTEMBER 8, 2008

BY SUZANNE HENDERSON

President Susan Danskin called the first meeting of the year to order, welcoming members and guests. She invited everyone to participate in the club for an exciting year of activities.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Susan announced that annual dues are now due. Membership costs \$15 per household, \$10 for students. Each member/household will receive a monthly newsletter. At the request of club treasurer Kim Kline, who was unable to attend the meeting, Ann Mitchell collected dues from anyone ready to pay. Susan announced that renewing members must pay their dues by the end of October in order to continue receiving the newsletter. She also pointed out that voting rights can only be allowed for paid members.
- Susan reminded everyone that the Johnson Center doors open at 7 P.M. on meeting nights. No entry is allowed prior to that time, and the doors should *never* be propped open. The Wild Birds Unlimited store will be open from 7–7:30 P.M. on meeting nights.
- Susan is holding a few forgotten items from the June dinner at Myers and invited the owners to claim them. She has a lens cap for binoculars and a long handled, slotted spoon.
- The 60th annual New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) meeting will be held in Rochester, September 19–21. Kevin McGowan volunteered to attend as a voting delegate for the Cayuga Bird Club.
- NYSOA's Lillian Stoner Award, to help young people become interested in ornithology, is providing three \$350 cash awards this year for recipients to attend the NYSOA meeting. Two award recipients this year, Shawn Billerman and Tom Johnson, were nominated by the Cayuga Bird Club.
- Susan encouraged everyone to support teams competing Sept 12–13 in the Montezuma Muckrace. The money raised will help fund shorebird habitat. The club will cover the entrance fee for three teams: The Downy Chicks (youth), Ryan Douglas—the one-man no-fossil-fuel team (low carbon), and the student team of Jay, Shawn, Tim, and Brad.
- The Nominating Committee (Laura Stenzler, Susan Danskin, and Gladys Birdsall) presented the slate of officers to be voted on at the October meeting: Susan Danskin for President, Kim Kline

for Treasurer, Suzanne Henderson for Recording Secretary, Bob McGuire for Vice-President, Colleen Richards for Corresponding Secretary, and Marty Schlabach for Director. The floor will be open at the October meeting for any further nominations. Any additional nominations also can be made by contacting Susan or Gladys. Any member interested in joining officers and guest speakers for dinner at a local restaurant at about 5:30 P.M. on meeting nights should look for the invitation on the Cayugabirds-L email list or contact Susan Danskin.

- Susan thanked three valued volunteers in the club: Susan Earle, the outgoing Corresponding Secretary; Laura Stenzler, the outgoing Vice President; and Bard Prentiss, the outgoing Director.
- Susan, a teacher at the De-Witt Middle School, is looking for volunteers to accompany the school's 8th grade trip to Taughannock Park on Friday, October 3. One of the student activity choices at the park will be birding.
- NYSOA's *Kingbird* is in need of an editor for Region 3 to compile quarterly reports of bird observations and highlights from the Finger Lakes Region. Susan invited anyone interested in helping to contact her.

OLD BUSINESS

- Tompkins County Friends of the Library book sale weekends will be here soon. Susan passed around a sign up sheet to canvass interest and available time slots. The sale dates are October 11–13, 18–20, and 25–28.
- Reading of the Cayuga Lake Basin Bird List at Monday Night Seminars has been a long time Cayuga Bird Club tradition. Susan asked for a volunteer to coordinate readers. She also passed around a sign-up sheet for the fall seminars.
- The Cayuga Bird Club will be publishing a *Native Plants for Native Birds* book, a compilation of "Native Plants for Native Birds" columns written by Joel Baines, with photographs by David Ruppert, and published in the club's newsletter. Thanks to the tremendous efforts by Anne Marie Johnson, Joel, David, and Laura Stenzler, the book will be ready for printing sometime in early 2009. This is an expensive venture, however, and the club needs to raise money for the project to be completed. The

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club needs volunteers to visit businesses and solicit donations. It is hoped that with lots of teams of one or two people, each team will only need to canvass one or two businesses for donations. A printed mock-up of the cover and a few articles will be available to show potential donors. Advertisements are not permitted, but donors will be acknowledged in the book. Businesses also will be able to sell the book. Individual members are encouraged to contribute as well.

- Susan thanked Ann Mitchell and Colleen Richards for providing refreshments this evening. Linda Clougherty and

Bobby Monroe volunteered to provide cookies for the October 13 meeting.

BASIN LIST

Bob McGuire read the Cayuga Lake Basin bird list and recorded the rather extensive entries.

EVENING PROGRAM

In her presentation, "Tinkering with Light to Wear a Rainbow," Kim Bostwick amazed the audience with the physics of color production in bird feathers. Birds produce feather color through differential absorption (various pigments) and differential reflection (scattering light on the surfaces). Two of the most important pigments are carotenoids and

melanins. Carotenoids cannot be synthesized by a bird; they must be acquired from food. Melanins can be manufactured in the body and can generate a very specific pattern. Parrots have their own set of pigments, and there are other pigments as well. Feather color is a complex marvel. Is the color from pigment or structure? For a simplified examination, hold a feather up to a light. Observe the front side color; then see if the light that filters through the feather is colored. If it isn't (as with a Blue Jay feather), the color is the result of differential reflection; if it is (as with a Northern Flicker feather), the color is from differential absorption. Some birds have feathers employing both mechanisms. 🐦

FIELD TRIP REPORT: LOCAL HOTSPOTS, SEPTEMBER 14

BY MARK CHAO

I led a group of sixteen on the Cayuga Bird Club field trip on Sunday, September 14, starting at the Lab of Ornithology and ending along upper Freese Road.

In Sapsucker Woods, we found relatively little migrant activity, as expected given the steady south winds of the previous few days. Still, our final tally of birds turned out to be pretty satisfyingly diverse. Highlights included two Blackpoll Warblers; one male American Redstart; two Pileated Woodpeckers together on the tallest snag in the main pond; a few young Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers; a Green Heron in the shadows in the Fuller Wetlands; and a sweep of all three local Mimidae found from one spot under the power lines east of the road—Brown Thrasher (seen only by Andre Desrochers), a Northern Mockingbird (only the second time I've seen the species in Sapsucker Woods), and some Gray Catbirds.

At about 10:10 A.M., we stationed ourselves on the Dyce Lab lawn to scan across Freese Road for the American Golden-Plovers reported the previous day. Our search of the plowed field turned up only two Brown-headed Cowbirds in motley mid-molt plumage. But then our gaze drifted upward to the hazy sky, which suddenly was filled with slowly swirling Broad-winged Hawks—first a kettle of at least 18 to the southwest, then a few more on the

western horizon, then more and more arriving from the north, another kettle of 26, and some passing right overhead. All the birds seemed clearly to be heading south, despite the steady headwind. In the end, we conservatively estimated that we saw at least 65 Broad-winged Hawks passing over, plus a southbound Osprey and a local Turkey Vulture and Red-tailed Hawk. It was just about the most exhilarating fifteen minutes of raptor-watching I've ever had, and I think that others felt the same way.

With a scant half-hour left, I offered to let two of our more hard-core group members fight it out over what to do next—search more for the plovers, including a check of the field near the Liddell Lab (Dave Nutter had found two here earlier in the morning, but we didn't find out until later), or go to the garden plots for sparrows. Too civil to argue, they left the choice to me. I opted for the gardens. There the pickings were modest, except for a close encounter with a Bobolink, which was trapped in a weed-choked corridor between two mesh fences about 18 inches apart. I waded into the neck-high ragweed and pushed open a gap in the tangle, through which the bird escaped and flew off to the north.

Many thanks to all who joined the trip! 🐦

President's Message

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Now onto club business: I have been pleased to see so many members eager to step up to the plate when the call has gone out for volunteer efforts. Every time the club participates in the Friends of the Library Sale, new faces join us. People who have never before read "the list" are taking the brave step of reading it for the first time at a Monday Night Seminar. My recent request for people willing to fill the positions of Corresponding Secretary and Director resulted in more volunteers than available positions. I am hoping that there are still plenty of you waiting for just the right opportunity to offer your assistance to an extremely worthy cause.

The *Native Plants for Native Birds* book project is just such a worthy cause. Right now the project is in need of volunteers willing to solicit local garden related businesses for donations to assist in funding the book. Those of you who have provided the club with an email address should have received a detailed explanation of the task. If you did not receive the email, please do not hesitate to contact me for more information. This is a great, short-term, relatively easy way to assist the club in a project that we will be able to look back on with pride. I strongly encourage you to offer your assistance.

The *Native Plants for Native Birds* book project is also in need of your financial generosity. Funds from the club's assets and donations from local businesses are unlikely to provide all of the upfront costs of publication. Joel Baines, David Ruppert, and Anne Marie Johnson each have donated an incredible amount of time and energy to the project, and it is really taking shape. We hope to go to press in late winter and sell the book in early spring, but we need to insure that we have the funds necessary for printing. Please remember that donations are tax-deductible and any profits from this endeavor will be used to fund a club project such as another birding kiosk or a native plant garden. A donation form is included in this newsletter for your convenience.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Susan Earle for her service as Corresponding Secretary and Bard Prentiss for his service as Director. Susan regularly communicated with guest speakers, helping to set them at ease about such issues as auditorium setup and promptly thanking them for their time and effort. Bard was always on call, ready to assist the officers with the ins and outs of running the club. Their services to the Cayuga Bird Club are greatly appreciated.



October Speaker Profile:

Andrea Townsend

Andrea Townsend is a Ph.D. candidate in the Fuller Evolutionary Biology Program at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. She studies mating strategies and disease-mediated inbreeding depression in cooperatively breeding American Crows. Additionally, Andrea studies the genetic diversity of endemic birds of Hispaniola. She identifies genetically distinct populations for conservation priority and seeks to understand reasons for the radiations of single-island endemics in Hispaniola. 🐦

CAYUGA BIRD CLUB TREASURER'S REPORT

BY KIM KLINE

9/1/07-8/31/08 INCOME STATEMENT

REVENUE

Member dues	1,990.00
Donations	785.00
Interest	19.70
CD Interest	<u>244.25</u>
Total Revenue	\$3,038.95

EXPENSES

Newsletter postage	414.00
Newsletter printing	593.34
Newsletter labels	<u>18.89</u>
Newsletter Total	1,026.23
Insurance	498.00
Muckrace Muckrace	200.00
Entertainment	121.17
Donation—Finger Lakes Land Trust	111.00
Travel—NYSOA meeting	150.00
Dues—NYSOA	30.00
Christmas Count net	<u>130.00</u>
Total Expenses	\$2,266.40

NET INCOME \$772.55

CASH ASSETS AS OF 8/31/08

Checking	87.27
Evans Fund	481.79
Special Projects fund	770.20
General Savings	2,819.64
Tompkins Trust Company CD	<u>3,367.17</u>
Total Cash	\$7,526.07
8/31/07 Cash	6,753.52
Net Income	<u>772.55</u>
8/31/08 Cash	\$7,526.07

Montezuma Muckrace 2008

Cayuga Bird Club sponsored teams swept this year's Muckrace. The Cornell student team, EmpidoMAX! (Jay McGowan, Shawn Billerman, Tom Johnson, and Brad Walker), won the competition with 130 species. (Their report will appear in next month's newsletter.) The Downy Chicks won the youth category, and Ryan Douglas, The St. Louis Cardinal, won the low carbon category. According to the Muckrace web site, 74 birders participated in 20 teams, and they tallied 186 species, only two fewer than the record 188 species recorded in 2006 and up from 177 in 2007.

The St. Louis Cardinal

BY RYAN DOUGLAS

This year I participated in the Muckrace on bicycle, competing in the Low Carbon category, and since I couldn't convince anyone to join me, I was a team of one—The St. Louis Cardinal. I began the morning at around 5:50 A.M. at the Audubon Center near Savannah with my mountain bike, and by 6:30 A.M. I had heard (and seen, thanks to my bike's removable headlight) all three common owls. I also flushed a few American Woodducks off the side of the road between Carncross and Marten's Tract in the pre-dawn light.

I tried to wait for sunrise at Marten's Tract, but the mosquitoes were too much to bear. Next I headed to Howland Island, where the bugs were just as bad. I ended up spending about five minutes on the bridge over the Seneca River just because there were no bugs! It helped that a Warbling Vireo was singing at eye level and a Green Heron was hunting on the river's edge.

The first pond I came to after the bridge held a few Hooded Mergansers and American Wigeon that took off when my wet brakes squealed. I had zero warblers to show for about 75 minutes on Howland Island.

On my way back to Marten's Tract, I found a large mixed flock

that was mobbing a Great Horned Owl. At Marten's Tract, I was surprised to find a male Rose-breasted Grosbeak hanging out in the cattails. Several shorebirds were running around, but without a scope, I could only confidently identify a Greater Yellowlegs.

At around 10 A.M., I was back at the Audubon Center where I switched the mountain bike for my road bike and spotting scope. I visited East Road, May's Pool, the North Spring Pool, and the refuge's visitor center. In the end, I biked just shy of 52 miles and totaled 103 birds.

The Downy Chicks

BY PERRI MCGOWAN

The fourth year of the Downy Chicks' participation in the Montezuma Muckrace went well. We won the youth division of the Muckrace for the fourth year running. We found 83 species, a record for us! This year the Downy Chicks was made up of Rachel Rosenberg, Olivia Rosenberg, and Perri McGowan—sadly we lacked our fourth team member from past years, Sarah Beckwith. We thank Ken Rosenberg, Anne James, and Kevin McGowan for being our chauffeurs once again.

Because of rain, we decided to wait until just before 8 A.M. on



Kevin McGowan

The Downy Chicks—Olivia Rosenberg, Perri McGowan, and Rachel Rosenberg, with their trophy

Saturday morning, September 13, to start the race. Perhaps if we had started the night before, we could have done even better! One of our highlights was seeing Canada Geese, a White-fronted Goose, and a Snow Goose all in the same field together on the refuge's wildlife drive. Another highlight was seeing four plovers (Black-bellied, Golden, Semi-palmated, and Killdeer) and a Red Knot all at once at the Audubon center ponds. That was pretty cool (and the Red Knot was a life bird for me!). We saw some good birds, a lot of which the Downy Chicks have never seen on the Muckrace before, but we also missed a lot of ordinary birds (Red-tailed Hawk!!). We had a few low points, as is inevitable in such a competition, but we came through it no worse for wear—for the most part! The saddest part of this year was knowing that it is our last year together. Next year I will be too old to be in the youth competition, and so the Downy Chicks are no more, except in spirit.

We collected around \$205 in pledges this year. The Downy Chicks team thanks the Cayuga Bird Club for sponsoring us again this year. Thank you for helping us participate in a great event! 🐦

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW

IF YOU HAVE NOT RENEWED YOUR CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEMBERSHIP, PLEASE SEND IN THIS FORM WITH YOUR DUES TODAY. DUES ARE \$15 ANNUALLY PER HOUSEHOLD.

If your label is on the reverse side of this page and the address is correct, indicate below which type of newsletter you would like to receive and the amount of money enclosed, and mail this page along with a check made out to "Cayuga Bird Club."

If there is no address label or if your address has changed, fill out the form below.

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

Phone number _____ email address _____

Dues _____ Donation _____

Select newsletter format: paper (b & w) _____ electronic (color pdf sent by email) _____

MAIL TO:

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

Tom Johnson



*Sanderling at
Myers Point
in Lansing on
September 8, 2008.*

Native Plants for Native Birds Donations Requested

BY SUSAN DANSKIN

The *Native Plants for Native Birds* book project is well under way. Text is being finalized, additional photographs are being taken, and volunteers to solicit donations from local businesses are being sought. Those business donations, in conjunction with funds from the clubs coffers, are unlikely to be enough to cover the full costs of publication. Please consider making a generous tax-deductible donation to the Cayuga Bird Club to help bring this very worthwhile project to fruition. The final product will be a book that the club will be proud to have produced. Many club and community members will display a copy in their own libraries and make regular use of its information.

Send this page and your payment to the Cayuga Bird Club (address in the form above) or bring it to the October meeting with your check made payable to "Cayuga Bird Club." Please fill in the address blanks in the above form as appropriate based on your selection below, even if you have already paid your dues.

Enclosed is my donation to the Cayuga Bird Club for the *Native Plants for Native Birds* book project in the amount of

\$50

\$100

\$250

\$500

other \$ _____

Acknowledgement of my donation and a receipt for tax purposes can be sent:

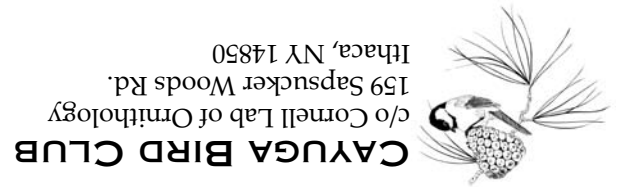
in electronic format to the email address in the form above (please print neatly)

in paper format to the address on the label on the reverse side of this page or in the form above

Ruddy Turnstone at Myers Point in Lansing
on September 8, 2008.



Tom Johnson



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MONTEZUMA MUCKRACE 2008

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW

NATIVE PLANTS FOR NATIVE BIRDS
DONATIONS REQUESTED



Kevin McGowan

NEXT MEETING OCTOBER 13

ANDREA TOWNSEND, FEATURED SPEAKER

“THE SECRET SEX LIVES OF AMERICAN CROWS”

SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS