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# Feathers

## The Colorado Chicken Chase *by Bernard Grossman*



Figure 1. Franklin's Gulls

– article and photos continue on Page 35

Chris and I traveled to Colorado in mid-April, 2010, to participate in what is commonly called “The Great Chicken Chase.” Colorado is fortunate to have nine species of *Phasianidae* (Pheasants, Grouse, and Allies) within its borders. Two species, the chukar and the ring-necked pheasant, are introduced, while the other seven are native. We traveled with Fieldguides, Inc., with a group of twelve other birders and two guides, Megan Crewe and Dan Lane, who are America’s tour specialists.

The state’s eastern portion is part of the Great Plains and is arid and relatively flat. Cattle ranching and grain farming are the principal economic activities. The northeast corner is historically tall grass prairie, while the southeast is short grass prairie. The Rockies split the state in half along a north/south axis, and the

state’s western portion is range and basin geography. Economically, extractive industries, particularly coal, as well as tourism and ranching are important in the west.

Our tour started in Denver with the first overnight in Pueblo and successive stops in Lamar, Wray, Evans, Gunnison, Fruita (Grand Junction), Craig, Walden, and finally Denver again. This traces out what is essentially a figure eight lying on its side and required over 2000 miles of driving in the ten-day trip period. We saw spectacular scenery, many mammals and almost all of our target species.

The trip started in the early afternoon outside Denver International Airport at a pasture along the roadside. The field was home to a BLACK-TAILED PRAIRIE DOG colony as well as some BURROWING OWLS. We were also able

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**HMBC BOARD  
Officers**

**President:**

Gary Goodness  
15 Kelly Avenue  
Albany NY 12203  
862-9260  
Goodness@nycap.rr.com

**Vice-President:**

Jackie Bogardus  
303 North Pole Road  
Melrose, NY 12121  
588-5736  
jackiedb@nycap.rr.com

**Secretary:**

**John Hershey**  
15 Carriage Road  
Clifton Park, NY 12065  
371-3114  
hersheyj@nycap.rr.com

**Treasurer:**

Ellen Pemrick  
298 Vly Rd.  
Niskayuna, NY 12309  
452-4384  
lnmp@nycap.rr.com

**Directors**

Don Gresens 370-3923  
dgresens@nycap.rr.com  
Bernie Grossman 399-9159  
bgrossman@nycap.rr.com  
John Kent 426-7919  
jwkent@verizon.net  
Patti Packer 399-4843  
pattiac@nycap.rr.com  
Elayne Ryba 312-7384  
eryba@nycap.rr.com

**Committee Chairs**

**Birdline:** Phil Whitney  
477-9050  
birdline@hmhc.net  
**Conservation:** Patti Packer  
399-4843  
pattiac@nycap.rr.com  
**Field Trips:** Donna Zimmerman  
869-6624  
fieldtrips@hmhc.net  
**Jr. Activities:** Steve Mesick  
Yugruguru@aol.com  
**Membership:** Dan Welch  
477-2980  
Dan@sweaterventure.com  
**Programs:** Scott Stoner  
785-6760  
programs@hmhc.net  
**Publications:** Chris Grossman  
399-9159  
publications@hmhc.net  
**Publicity:** Ann B'Rells  
355-5615  
ann9br-hmhc@yahoo.com  
**Raptor Migration:** Gary Goodness  
862-9260  
Goodness@nycap.rr.com  
**Records:** (vacant)  
**Reist Sanctuary:** Michael Gann  
377-2560  
mgann@nycap.rr.com  
**Social:** Denise Hackert-Stoner  
785-6760


## President's Corner



The Annual Meeting on April 19, 2010 was a fine success. A thank you must be extended to Scott and Denise Stoner for taking care of the dinner and the program. Special thanks goes to Bill Lee for presenting the Sam Madison Award to a worthy candidate, Laurel Tormey Cole. Many commendations were awarded to worthy members and a President's Award was given to David Martin for many years of valuable service to the club. He certainly has made us better.

Our website-data base project is being beta-tested now which means it will be up and running soon. The new bridge project at the Reist Sanctuary is going as planned. The lumber has been delivered and carried to each bridge site. A special thank you is extended to Brother Yusef Burgess of the Green Tech High Charter School for providing 16 young men to carry the very heavy hemlock boards to the bridge sites. Also, special thanks go to the Town of Niskayuna and their Highway Superintendent, Frank Gavin, for providing a truck and driver to distribute the wood. If you would like to send a thank you donation to Green Tech High, contact me for details. A special thanks to Donna Zimmerman and her committee for setting up a year full of field trips, and thanks to Scott Stoner's group for a successful year of programs. It was a successful year for the club and I feel the current board and officers will keep up the trend.

Best Regards,

Gary Goodness, President 

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### HMBC Contact Information

**BIRDLINE of EASTERN NEW YORK: (518) 439-8080**

**E-mail:** [contact@hmhc.net](mailto:contact@hmhc.net)

**HMBC website:** <http://hmhc.net>

### HMBC Board Meetings

HMBC Board meetings are open to all Club members. Meetings are held at Five Rivers Center or other local venues at 7:00 PM, usually on the second Monday of odd-numbered months.

### Newsletter Contributions Desired

- Have anything you think other birders would be interested in?
- Have a favorite birding spot you want to share?
- Are there any stories or photos that would inspire others?

Share them with the HMBC membership by submitting them to the addresses below:

Please send all *electronic* submissions *via e-mail* to: Chris Grossman at [bgrossman@nycap.rr.com](mailto:bgrossman@nycap.rr.com)

Send **all** paper submissions to:

*Chris Grossman*

*7 Nott Rd.*

*Rexford, NY 12148*

to see RED-TAILED HAWK, SWAINSON'S HAWK, HORNED LARKS, KESTREL, and BLACK-BILLED MAGPIES.

The next morning, we took off for Lamar in the southeastern corner passing through Boone and Ordway where several enormous cattle feedlots are located. In ponds, we found GADWALL, CINNAMON TEAL, NORTHERN SHOVELER and REDHEAD. In one wet area, a small flock of FRANKLIN'S GULLS (Figure 1) was feeding, and a flock of YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRDS (Figure 2) was spotted in a brushy area. The next stop was a large reservoir called Lake Henry. Here we found AMERICAN COOT, WHITE PELICAN, WESTERN GREBE, and GREAT BLUE HERON.

As we drove further, we entered into the Comanche National Grasslands and saw PRONGHORN ANTELOPE herds. SCALED QUAIL and BREWER'S BLACKBIRDS were found in a ranch corral. The vans began



Figure 2. Yellow-headed Blackbirds

to descend into Cottonwood Canyon, and Chris saw a FERRUGINOUS HAWK. Unfortunately, it flew before my side of

the vehicle could get on it. Megan and Dan prepared a picnic lunch just before we entered the Canyon proper. We spotted a GOLDEN EAGLE soaring above a cliff, and I saw it land in its nest.



Figure 3. Singing Spotted Towhee in Cottonwood Canyon, CO

After lunch and in the canyon proper, we stopped at a small roadside clearing. Three LEWIS' WOODPECKERS were working the cottonwood trees and a Woodhouse's race of the WESTERN SCRUB JAY was spotted. This race is found in the eastern portion of the range. We also heard a STELLER'S JAY. At another canyon stop, BEWICK'S WREN, ROCK WREN, SPOTTED TOWHEE (Figure 3), TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE, MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD, CURVED-BILLED THRASHER, AND RUFOUS-CROWNED SPARROW were found. A yellow-shafted form of the NORTHERN FLICKER flew by. A bit further along, we spotted a flock of the Merriam's form of WILD TURKEY (Figure 4). This race has a whitish rump and tail, and it is found in the Southwest.

Our encounter with the LESSER PRAIRIE CHICKEN (Figure 5) came early the next morning. We left Lamar at 4 AM to drive east to Granada where we met



Figure 4. Wild Turkey (Merriam's Form), Cottonwood Canyon, CO

Fred Dorenkamp, a retired farmer, who took us in an old school bus to an old field outside of Holly, CO. As the sky lightened, we could see the chickens dancing and strutting on their lek about three hundred yards from us. As the dawn progressed, the chickens' crests and expanded air sacs became visible. We tried to take pictures, but the distance and poor light limited their quality.

After the birds flew off, Fred drove us to his home where he and his wife served a great western breakfast. Their yard had a GREAT HORNED OWL's nest with at least one youngster. We located the parents perched on a limb about a quarter mile away. An EASTERN BLUEBIRD was seen at a lunch stop on our way north to Wray in the northeast corner.

We saw the GREATER PRAIRIE CHICKEN (Figure 6) at a lek on the Bledsoe family's ranch outside of Wray. The evening before we went to the lek, Bob Bledsoe met us and provided a description of his family's cattle feeding operation. Ten thousand acres out of

65,000 were used to grow feed for cattle raised primarily for the Japanese market, a process requiring rigorous control of each animal's identity and history. The chicken lek is located right near one of the feed growing areas. Again we drove out in the dark in the vans through herds of curious Black Angus beeves to the lek. This time, the birds were all around the vans as the sky

brightened. The birds performed their dance as close as ten feet from us, so the sight and sound were amazing. Chris and I were able to get great pictures and videos of the action. We drove out after the birds dispersed and into a covey of NORTHERN BOBWHITE QUAIL. There was also another pair of perched GREAT HORNED OWLS and a PRAIRIE FALCON. In town later, we saw a BROWN THRASHER that was at the far edge of its range.

After breakfast, we drove west toward Evans, a small town south of Greeley, CO. Our route took north into the Pawnee National Grasslands where our particular goal was to be County Road 96. The rolling, scrubby fields on either side of CR96 were a mix of sage and grass covered private and public lands with small numbers of cattle and PRONGHORN ANTELOPE. We also saw many of the prairie form of HORNED LARK as well as MCCOWN'S LONGSPUR (Figure 7) and VESPER SPARROW. Dan Lane may have seen a CHESTNUT-COLLARED LONGSPUR. The other target bird for this area was THE MOUNTAIN PLOVER (Figure 8). A pair was spotted at the intersection of CR96 and CR57 along with a pair OF GOLDEN EAGLE.

After checking into the motel in Evans, we went a few miles to the marshy inlet of Lower Latham Reservoir. On the water



Figure 5. Lesser Prairie Chicken on Lek, Holly, CO



Figure 6. Greater Prairie Chicken on Lek, Wray, CO

itself, we spotted many duck species and CLARK'S GREBE, WESTERN GREBE and WHITE PELICAN. An AMERICAN BITTERN, AMERICAN COOT, VIRGINIA RAIL, MARSH WREN, and YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD were found in the marsh itself. Later at the dinner parking lot, an injured RED FOX limped past.

The fifth day was spent driving from Evans to Gunnison, CO, over the Front Range west of Denver. We stopped for breakfast at a diner in Silverthorne, a skiing and second home community, and for lunch in Leadville, Co, an historic mining town. A few stops were made for birding where OSPREY, BUFFLEHEAD, CLARK'S NUTCRACKER, TREE SWALLOW, MOUNTAIN CHICKADEE, PYGMY NUTHATCH, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, CASSIN'S FINCH, gray-headed form of the DARK-EYED JUNCO, RED CROSSBILL, and PINE SISKIN were seen.

The GUNNISON SAGE GROUSE (Figure 9) is a recent split from the SAGE GROUSE. It is slightly smaller, has a different



Figure 7. McCown's Longspur on CR 96, Pawnee National Grasslands, CO



Figure 8. Mountain Plover on CR 96, Pawnee National Grasslands, CO

voice and is geographically isolated from the SAGE GROUSE population. Only a few hundred GUNNISON SAGE GROUSE presently exist. The lek we visited is located on hilly, open range on state land in Wanita near a road. The Conservation Department had set up a blind inside a small trailer parked on the road's edge, and two department employees were collecting numbers and behavior data from it. After we were settled in, the side was opened to a still dark range. Again the birds were a few hundred yards away, and they became visible as the sky lightened. The birds performed their mating dance as we watched. Chris and I took pictures and videos, but the distance and light levels again have limited their quality. Initially a COYOTE chased off some of the birds, and, later, a GOLDEN EAGLE scared most



Figure 9. Gunnison Sage Grouse on Lek Near Gunnison, CO

of the rest. Finally the last male flew toward the blind landing to drink from a stream a hundred feet from us. Pictures are attached.

After returning to the hotel in Gunnison and packing, we drove north to Crested Butte, another Colorado second home and skiing community. The target here was the BROWN-CAPPED ROSY-FINCH, which we found at a local feeder. We also saw the red-shafted form of the NORTHERN FLICKER. At one time, the yellow- and red-shafted forms were considered separate species, but they are now lumped together. As we later returned to the center of the state, we began to see the inter-grade form called the orange-shafted. Another interesting regional color morph was seen with

and Fruita. At Blue Mesa Reservoir in the Curecanti we saw a flock of WHITE-FACED IBIS, and later along a river paralleling the road, Megan spotted an AMERICAN DIPPER.

The Colorado National Monument lies between Fruita and Grand Junction and is a huge mesa with an incredible canyon eroded into it. A twenty-three mile road climbs up the mesa and follows the edge of the canyon. At the bottom of the road near the Fruita entrance, we found BLACK-THROATED SPARROW in the brush. The weather was windy and foggy as we drove up to the visitors' center. In the area around the center, we found PINYON JAY, BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD, GRAY VIREO, BLACK-

plant. Early the next morning, we drove out county roads to visit both ends of Jimmy Dunn Gulch to find GREATER SAGE GROUSE and SHARP-TAILED GROUSE. Megan and Dan had scouted the roads the previous afternoon because the weather had turned wet. Along CR 74, they spotted a DUSKY GROUSE, WHICH was displaying on the edge of the road as we drove by in the dark. The DUSKY GROUSE is a split of the former BLUE GROUSE with the DUSKY GROUSE being the interior species. The coastal species is now the SOOTY GROUSE. As the daylight increased as we were further along the road, we saw first a LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE and then both the GREATER SAGE GROUSE and the SHARP-TAILED GROUSE.

CR 74A took us to the other end of the Gulch. A SHARP-TAILED GROUSE lek was located very near the road. We watched the birds do their mating dance until they dispersed. Sandhill Cranes were seen on the drive back to Craig.

The drive from Craig to Walden required us to cross the 9400-foot Rabbit Ears Pass. The light rain turned to snow as the vans passed through Steamboat Spring, and the ride over the Pass was interesting. Walden had a few inches on the ground when we arrived in the afternoon. The wet snow continued after dark with a total of about eight inches on the ground at 5:30 AM when we went out to visit a Greater Sage Grouse lek. The side road was unplowed which ended that excursion. After breakfast we were able to drive out toward the lek and John Lake after packing up and seeing a perched Bald Eagle move onto its nest. Along the way, we saw many Horned Larks feeding on the plowed road as well as some Sage Thrashers. The vans were unable to drive up a muddy hill, so the lek visit was scrapped. The trip's final stop on the way back to Denver was the 12,000-foot Loveland Pass to look for White-tailed Ptarmigan. The late departure from Walden delayed our



Figure 10. California Condor #87 (Captive Bred, 15 Year Old Male), Grand Canyon, AZ

DOWNY WOODPECKERS. In this case, the bird's back and wings have fewer white spots.

We returned to Gunnison and headed northwest through the Curecanti National recreation area and then the Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park toward Grand Junction

THROATED GRAY WARBLER, and a pair of courting PEREGRINE FALCONS. A surprise find was a RED-NAPED SAPSUCKER quietly working a pine tree. Later, a pair OF WESTERN BLUEBIRDS was seen.

The day ended with a drive northeast toward Craig, which is supported by ranching, coal mining, and a huge power

arrival at the Pass until mid-afternoon. The previous night's snow had brought out hordes of skiers and snowboarders, so the bird was missed.


We finished our trip with a gala dinner. Overall, I saw 136 species of which 16 were life-listers. Chris saw one more species, the FERRUGINOUS HAWK, and, so had one more life-list bird. Not mentioned in the narrative were the various other mammals seen. These include DESERT COTTONTAIL; SNOWSHOE

HARE; LEAST and HOPI CHIPMUNKS; WYOMING, THIRTEEN-LINED, and GOLDEN-MANTLED GROUND SQUIRRELS; ROCK SQUIRREL; BLACK-TAILED, WHITE-TAILED, and GUNNISON PRAIRIE DOGS; ELK; MULE DEER; and BIGHORN SHEEP.

The next morning, we flew to Phoenix to visit family and to visit the Grand Canyon. Other desert species were added to our year list, but the best sighting was a trio of CALIFORNIA CONDORS soaring in the canyon below Lookout Studio.


Included is a pair of pictures (Figures 10 and 18) of #87 perched in a tree and then on a ledge in the canyon.

The Colorado Chicken Chase is an exciting, but grueling adventure through a beautiful part of America. The grouses' and chickens' mating behavior is a wonderful thing to observe, and I highly recommend the experience.

*NOTE: Color versions of the Figures are available in the web edition of Feathers.* 

## Addendum to Schenectady Christmas Bird Count

In the April issue of *Feathers*, the following should have been added to the Schenectady Christmas Bird Count report:

Group G, Michael Crevier, should have had COOPER'S HAWK, RUFFED GROUSE, and COMMON RAVEN listed in his field party description, as his was the only field party to tally those species. 

## Washington County Waterfowl March 21, 2010

Fifteen enthusiastic birders enjoyed unexpected sunshine as they scoured the Hudson in search of waterfowl and early migrants. The river hosted low numbers of ducks – COMMON GOLDENEYE, COMMON MERGANSER, HOODED MERGANSER, MALLARD, and BLACK DUCKS being the most numerous; a smattering of BUFFLEHEAD added interest. A small marshy area yielded views of a single NORTHERN PINTAIL, a lone AMERICAN WIGEON, and GREEN-WINGED TEAL, while a small pond offered more teal, WOOD DUCKS, a mostly cream-colored leucistic MALLARD, and a GREAT BLUE HERON. At the roadsides we found RED-BREASTED NUTHATCHES and WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCHES, DOWNY WOODPECKERS, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS, and PILEATED WOODPECKERS, CEDAR WAXWINGS, EASTERN BLUEBIRD, AMERICAN ROBIN, and a SONG SPARROW singing on territory, in addition to the expected blackbirds, CROWS, and BLUE JAYS. Not to be left out, a single KILLDEER circled above our heads and called as we tallied checklists on our return to the meeting place, making our total for the trip 41 species.

—Mona Bearor

## Vischer Ferry Preserve April 10, 2010

Fifteen enthusiastic participants arrived on Sunday evening for this field trip at Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve. Overall, the number and variety of ducks and waterfowl was a little disappointing, the greatest numbers of them apparently having already passed through on their way north. From the main entrance we walked south along the main path toward the River. We did see a few WOOD DUCKS, AMERICAN BLACK DUCKS, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, and RING-NECKED DUCKS. In the first pond to the west as we crossed the

Whipple Bridge we watched 2 PIED-BILLED GREBES, and then another one at the back pond. Although these grebes are rather plain-looking compared with most male ducks in breeding plumage, it's always great to see them because they are a species in decline and considered "highly at risk" by New York Audubon. Likewise, we counted approximately 50 RUSTY BLACKBIRDS along the main path. These birds are also in decline and carry the "highly at risk" status. We had lots of time to listen carefully to their unique "rusty gate song". Other noteworthy birds seen during our walk included GREAT BLUE HERON, BELTED KINGFISHER, TURKEY VULTURE, EASTERN PHOEBE, CAROLINA WREN, and EASTERN BLUEBIRD.

But, as usual, the bird that stole the show for this field trip was the AMERICAN WOODCOCK who performed his display flight near the river beginning around dusk. A WOODCOCK has been launching his display each year for at least the last 4 years from almost the exact same spot. We had a little more trouble than usual spotting him on the ground in the dark this year. This was partly because of the lack of moonlight. It got to be like an ink blot test trying to discern which brown blob on the ground in the dark was actually the WOODCOCK. However, we did get to see his silhouette very clearly as he engaged in his amazing flights over and over in the dark. Altogether, we finished the evening with 29 species, with the WOODCOCK again being a lifebird for many of the participants.

—John Hershey

## Cornell Lab of Ornithology/ Montezuma Wetlands Complex Saturday, April 24 – Sunday, April 25, 2010

The idea of this trip began as a simple, day visit to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca. After a behind-the-scenes tour was arranged of some of

the facilities at the Cornell Lab late last year, it seemed like a great idea to add a visit to the nearby Montezuma Wetlands Complex to the trip, making it a 2-day, overnight trip. Both the Cornell Lab and the Montezuma Wetlands Complex have well-deserved reputations in the birding world, making this trip so popular that the number of participants unfortunately had to be limited.

Our group of 20 arrived at the Cornell Lab in Ithaca, NY around mid-morning on Saturday. We were greeted by Scott Sutcliff, Director of Development and Planned Giving at the Lab, who provided an excellent tour for us that lasted almost 4 hours, including lunch and a birding walk at Sapsucker Woods. The Lab was very quiet on a Saturday morning with very few staff members present. We were told that sometimes on a weekend staff members might be working, but because of the season most of them were out birding and enjoying the weather. Our guide explained the unique mission of the Cornell Lab, which includes research, education, citizen science, and conservation. Although the Lab is integrated with Cornell University, it is entirely supported by private donations rather than by the University. One of the big attention-getters on the tour was viewing some of the thousands of preserved bird "skins" stored at the Lab and learning how they are preserved. In addition, we saw the storage facilities for the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds. Movie producers, we were told, often pay handsomely to use these high-quality recordings in their movies, but most of them are freely available online. The Lab's wildly successful citizen science project, e-bird, is administered here as well. We enjoyed some gourmet sandwiches in the Lab's staff room while watching the bird activity in the pond at Sapsucker Woods through the window.

Later we walked some of the trails at Sapsucker Woods, not expecting to



Scott Sutcliff leads the group on a bird walk at Sapsucker Woods. *Photo by Stan Blanchard*

find anything too spectacular because migration had not yet reached its peak. We ended up with a modest 31 species. One highlight was a GREAT BLUE HERON nest with eggs, which the parent appeared to be tending from time to time. We also found it amusing watching another GREAT BLUE HERON standing with one foot resting on a turtle's shell. Other highlights for us in this early afternoon walk were BELTED KINGFISHER, YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, EASTERN TOWHEE, FIELD SPARROW, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW and RUSTY BLACKBIRD. By far our best birds for the day at Cornell were not at Sapsucker Woods at all, but inside the Lab where we saw old specimens of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, Carolina Parakeets, and Passenger Pigeons – all sadly extinct, except maybe for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Shortly after our bird walk, an impromptu decision was made to head straight for the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge in Seneca Falls about 45 miles to the north. Although we had

originally planned to spend a little more time looking at exhibits in the lobby and browsing in the birding store before heading to our hotel, this change of plans was prompted by weather predictions for rain the next morning. While we



Scott and Luke look at specimens of Carolina Parakeets and Passenger Pigeons. *Photo by Stan Blanchard*

still had a sunny day, we wanted to make sure that we got some good birding in at Montezuma, and we did.

Arriving at the Montezuma Visitors' Center around 4:30 pm we got our first target species, about 10 PURPLE MARTINS associated with the Center's Purple Martin apartments. We also spotted a GREATER YELLOWLEGS or two, several SNOW GEESE, NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS and a NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD. We then started our caravan of 5 cars through the Wildlife Drive of the Refuge. Not long after starting, Stan's sharp eyes spotted a pair of SANDHILL CRANES in the tall grass off to the west. This was probably our most coveted target species. SANDHILL CRANES are fairly common breeders in parts of the western U.S. and Midwest. But, no confirmed breeders of this species were ever found in New York until June 2003 when a chick was found in the North Montezuma Wildlife Management Area (according to the Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State). In the 2 weeks prior to our trip, some

Sandhill Cranes were reported on internet listservs in the Montezuma area; but they were mostly flyovers, or heard, but not seen. Most of these reports were in the North Montezuma area rather than from Wildlife Drive. So, our discovery was a great find! We had plenty of good looks at the 2 stately Cranes with binoculars and scopes.

We could have called it a day at that point, but driving just a little further we discovered a lone goose to our east that was easily visible from the road. We stopped and looked carefully at this bird, trying to figure out what species it might be. We studied our field guides, and debated a number of possibilities. It looked a lot like an immature Greater White-fronted Goose, but a few details, such as a dark tip on the bill, did not quite fit some of the pictures we had. We also considered an immature dark-morph Snow Goose as well as a domestic Graylag Goose, or some hybrid thereof. The bird was very cooperative and provided good looks



Sandhill Cranes seen from Wildlife Drive. Photo by Kurt Matejka

and photos. In the end, we had to move on, without deciding upon the identity of the “Mystery Goose”.

On to Tschache Pool, we scored big

with another target bird, 3 or more CASPIAN TERNS. Here, and then nearby at May’s Point Pool, we found fairly large numbers of duck and waterfowl species. These included GREEN-WINGED TEAL, NORTHERN PINTAIL, BLUE-WINGED TEAL, NORTHERN SHOVELER, GADWALL, REDHEAD, RING-NECKED DUCK, RUDDY DUCK, AMERICAN COOT, and PIED-BILLED GREBE. For many of us, the number of NORTHERN SHOVELERS was far more than we had ever seen in one place before. The trip coordinator searched intently, but in vain, to find the Eurasian Wigeon that had been reported the day before here amongst a group of AMERICAN WIDGEONS at Tschache Pool. At this point we called it a day, and headed for the hotel in Auburn where most of us had dinner together at an Irish pub and restaurant.

The next morning after breakfast in the hotel we met again at the Montezuma Visitor’s Center shortly after 8 am with an overcast sky and light drizzle, as expected. We took the same route on Wildlife Drive to Tschache Pool and May’s Point Pool as we had the previous



Immature Greater White-fronted Goose seen from Wildlife Drive



Caspian Terns at Tschache Pool

day. For the most part we had a replay, bird wise, of the day before. We saw the “Mystery Goose” in the same spot again, but no Sandhill Cranes this time. Altogether we had as many as 6 OSPREY, 2 BALD EAGLES, 2 NORTHERN HARRIERS, and 1 AMERICAN KESTREL. Jennifer pointed out a SAVANNAH SPARROW to us over the radio, which many of us, then, got to see. As we proceeded further, their songs were heard frequently but they were hard to actually see. The ducks and waterfowl were similar to the day before but well-worth seeing again. In addition we had a GREAT EGRET at Tschache Pool and about 5 CASPIAN TERNS.

We eventually headed for Van Dyne Spoor Rd. further north in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. Here we found another target bird for the trip, 6 TRUMPETER SWANS. While looking

at a GREATER YELLOWLEGS in the scope, a WILSON’S SNIPE was discovered just behind it but somewhat camouflaged and hard to see. The SNIPE got a lot of attention with everyone lining-up behind the scopes to get a better look. Eventually someone discovered another SNIPE right next to it. After awhile we tore ourselves away from the SNIPES and moved a little further down the road where we found a rather cold-looking HORNED GREBE in rufous-and-yellow breeding plumage. We discovered a female BUFFLEHEAD as well. At this point around 1:00 pm the drizzle had turned into a steady rain, and everyone agreed to call it a day. However, as we were leaving on Van Dyne Spoor Rd. we heard and saw about 6 RUSTY BLACKBIRDS along the road.

Several days after returning to the Albany area, I noticed on an e-bird alert



Trumpeter Swan at Van Dyne Spoor Rd.

that a GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE had been reported on the Montezuma auto loop on the same day, Sunday, that we saw the “Mystery Goose”; and, it was specifically indicated as “confirmed” by e-bird. This prompted me to suspect that our “Mystery Goose” was, in fact, the same goose. I called the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge Visitors Center and talked to their biologist who was already well aware of the “Mystery Goose”. She stated that she was “confident” that this was a GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE based on experience with them in previous years. In addition, the regular, official reporter of birds for the Refuge agreed. This was good enough for me. In my reading of information on this bird in Birds of North America online, I learned that 10-15% of first spring immatures of this species do have a dark tip on the bill, like our bird, even though most of our field guides did not show it. This was not one of our target birds at all, but a GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE is considered “rare” even at Montezuma and I was happy to add this species to our already excellent list. Altogether then, for the whole trip we had a total of 76 species, many of them unlikely to be found in our own area, or at least not in such large numbers.

—John Hershey

## **Peebles Island State Park May 1, 2010**

At 8:45 am under clear skies, a temperature of 65 F, with no wind, 24 HMBC birders set out for a walk on a beautiful tranquil island. The island was cut out by the 6th and 7th tributaries of the Mohawk River. The island is a gift of these northbound tributaries. The 40 species sited were a mix of many of the bird families. DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, CANADA GOOSE, WOOD DUCK and MALLARD spotted the island as a GREAT EGRET looked on. The usual 3 gulls were present while an OSPREY and CHIMNEY SWIFTS, TREE SWALLOWS

and NORTHERN ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOWS looked down at them. The woods produced 3 Woodpecker species, EASTERN PHOEBE, GREAT-CRESTED FLYCATCHER and RED-EYED VIREO. HERMIT THRUSH, YELLOW WARBLER, BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK, BALTIMORE ORIOLE AND AMERICAN GOLDFINCH were FOY for many. We who live in the area are blessed with this island. Even if the bird count is low, you get the sense that the walk was special.

—Gary Goodness

## **Birds and Breakfast May 8, 2010**

The forecast was bad. We heard rain falling hard all night. This did not bode well for Birds and Breakfast, the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club’s annual rite of spring. And as the day dawned, the forecast was proven accurate as a steady rain continued to fall and the temperatures failed to rise.

As expected under the dreary circumstances, the early morning group drew few participants. But as the morning progressed, more and more brave souls joined us at the Five Rivers Environmental Center in Delmar, NY. All told, about 30 people tallied 78 species of birds that morning, with 7 species being first of the year for Five Rivers. Not bad for such a dismal day!

Here are some of the highlights:

GREEN HERON  
SPOTTED and SOLITARY SANDPIPER  
PILEATED WOODPECKER  
AMERICAN KESTREL  
COOPER’S HAWK  
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK  
OSPREY  
TURKEY VULTURE  
WILD TURKEY  
CHIMNEY SWIFT  
RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD  
RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET

LEAST and GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHERS, EASTERN PHOEBE, EASTERN KINGBIRD  
WOOD THRUSH and EASTERN BLUEBIRD  
YELLOW-THROATED, BLUE-HEADED, and RED-EYED VIREO  
SCARLET TANAGER  
BALTIMORE ORIOLE  
ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK (Many of these)

Warblers were the real highlight of the day, and one only had to observe the trees right around the Education Center to see many of them! Here is the list of warblers observed:

YELLOW WARBLER  
COMMON YELLOWTHROAT  
CAPE MAY WARBLER  
MAGNOLIA WARBLER  
LOUISIANA WATERTHRUSH  
NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH  
PALM WARBLER  
PRAIRIE WARBLER  
PINE WARBLER  
AMERICAN REDSTART  
BLACK AND WHITE WARBLER  
CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER  
BLUE-WINGED WARBLER  
OVENBIRD  
NORTHERN PARULA WARBLER  
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER  
BLACK-THROATED GREEN WARBLER

Our thanks go out to our trip leaders: John Kent, for leading the 6AM group and joining forces with the 7AM group, Alan Mapes, who co-led the 7AM trip with Scott, and Gregg Recer and Cathy Graitchen, who took out the 8AM group. And thanks to all the participants, who welcomed spring on such a rainy day!

—Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

## *75 Years In The Bird Business*

**Craig Thompson**, Director, Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

Monday, June 7, 2010 7:00 p.m.

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar

What we now call Five Rivers Center started out in 1933 as the Delmar Experimental Game Farm, dedicated to the propagation and the study of upland game birds and waterfowl. Innovative techniques developed here, such as perfecting the cannon net, revolutionized the wildlife management profession nationwide and put New York in the forefront of a growing conservation movement. Though the primary focus has changed from raising game birds in pens to raising environmental awareness in visitors, today the Center is still working to promote the conservation of our precious natural heritage, using bird study as a touchstone to deeper stewardship values.

Craig Thompson has been an environmental educator in NYS DEC's Division of Public Affairs for over 30 years. He has been the Director of Five Rivers Center since 1995. He did his undergraduate work at SUNY Buffalo and graduate work at Columbia University. In his other life, he is he is President of the Audubon Society of the Capital Region and Vice Chair of the Audubon Council of New York State.

## *Costa Rica*

**Gregg Recer**

Monday, September 13, 2010 7:00 p.m.

William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

*Details to follow.*

## *Speaker To Be Announced*

Monday, October 4, 2010 7:00 p.m.

William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

## *The Birds of Fort Drum*

**Jeff Bolsinger**

Monday, November 1, 2010 7:00 p.m.

*Details to follow.*

## *Holiday Party*

**Speaker To Be Announced**

Monday, December 6, 2010 7:00 p.m.

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar 

## Sam Madison Award

47

At the Annual Meeting, Bill Lee spoke kindly and respectfully of his past birding friend Sam Madison. He remembered Sam as a leader and visionary who led our club in so many ways. He led field trips, offered legal advice and was legendary in his desire to promote birding and conservation. Therefore, it is fitting to offer a Sam

Madison Award each year to a person who exemplifies his values. The award this year went to LAUREL TORMEY COLE, a Backyard Habitat Specialist at the Thatcher Nature Center. Laurel oversees bird education programs and citizen science projects such as Project Feeder Watch, the Great Backyard Bird Count, and Nest Box Monitoring. In


addition to bird education programs, Laurel offers workshops on native plant landscaping, and teaches about the importance of considering wildlife food value when choosing plants. Laurel is a perfect fit for the model established for the Sam Madison Award.

Congratulations, Laurel. 

## Workshop for HMBC Officers and Committees

There will be a workshop for HMBC Officers and Committees, Saturday, September 25, 2010 at the Pine Bush Discovery Center. There will

be birding from 7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. followed by a bagel breakfast. Then, from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. there will be policy discussions, with the goal of

creating a policy handbook for the club. Please contact Gary Goodness (862-9260) [Goodness@nycap.rr.com](mailto:Goodness@nycap.rr.com) if you will be attending. 

## Calls for Nominations for the Lillian Stoner Award

**N**YSOA (New York State Ornithological Association) has asked bird clubs to nominate a young member for the Lillian Stoner Award. This award is a scholarship that helps pay the expenses for a high school or college student to attend NYSOA's annual meeting. This year's meeting will be held in Auburn, NY, October 22-24, 2010.

If you would like to nominate a deserving student, please send a letter of recommendation, describing the credentials of your nominee to:

Gail Kirch  
 NYSOA Vice President and Awards  
 Chair  
[gkirch@stny.rr.com](mailto:gkirch@stny.rr.com)  
 607-723-3414

A letter from the student, while not required, is also desirable – describing his or her interest, how he or she got into birding, relevant past activities or research, and any future plans related to birding or ornithology. All letters of nomination are due by **August 20, 2010.**

## Need for Volunteers – Lupine Festival

**T**he Albany Pine Bush Preserve is planning its annual Lupine Festival to be held Saturday, June 5, 2010. They would be grateful for any volunteers that would like to come to the Pine Bush and help run the event that day. The event is planned for 10 a.m. – 4

p.m. and is free to the public. Volunteer duties include:

**Set-up** will start at (8:30 – 10 a.m.)

**Assisting at the game area** (the shifts are 9 – 11 a.m., 11 a.m. – 1 p.m., and 1 – 3:30 p.m.)

**Assisting at the registration table** (shifts are 9 – 11:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m., and 2 – 4 p.m.)

**Clean-up** (3:30 – 4:30 p.m.)

The theme this year is “*The Karner Blue Goes Green!*”

## JUNE

### PAPSCANEE ISLAND PRESERVE

**(Rensselaer County; morning)**

Saturday, June 5

Coordinator: Don Gresens  
370-3923  
dgresens@nycap.rr.com

This field trip will take us to the different habitats of Papscaanee Island Preserve consisting of deciduous forest, cultivated farmland and freshwater marshes where we will see a variety of bird species. Swallows, herons and Wood Ducks can be observed in the wetland areas. Titmice, nuthatches and woodpeckers are found in the forest as well as Eastern Wood-Pee-wee and Great-crested Flycatcher. Veery, Wood Thrush and American Redstarts are common. Other summer birds include Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Black and White and Blue-winged Warblers, Warbling and Red-eyed Vireos and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Meet at 7:00 a.m. in the Kmart parking lot on Routes 9 & 20 in East Greenbush to carpool since parking at the preserve is limited.

### RHEINSTROM HILL AUDUBON SANCTUARY & CENTER (Columbia County; morning)

Saturday, June 12

Coordinator: Larry Federman  
678-3248  
birderlarry@verizon.net

The Rheinstrom Hill Audubon Sanctuary and center is located in Craryville, Columbia County. The property offers moss-covered trails through old woods and there are also a couple of small meadows on "the Hill". Blackburnian Warbler is found nesting here, as is the usual suite of forest birds including Scarlet Tanager, Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and raptors such as Red-tailed & Cooper's Hawks. If time permits, we may walk the old railroad bed along Route 23 in search of warblers, flycatchers and other wetland species. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the parking area on the right at the top of the long sanctuary driveway.

### EMMA TREADWELL THACHER NATURE CENTER (Albany County; morning)

Saturday, June 19

Coordinator: Ellen Penrick  
425-4384  
lmp@nycap.rr.com

The Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center is located near Thompson's Lake State Park in Albany County. The property offers trails through diverse habitats including woodlands, meadows and fields. Nesting Tree Swallows and House Wrens are usually among the first birds we see. We also have found Scarlet Tanager, Indigo Bunting and Bobolink in past years. Depending on weather conditions, we will walk multiple trails in search of warblers, flycatchers, thrushes and other species. Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the larger parking area to the right of the main building.

**JUNE (continued)**

**DYKEN POND  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
EDUCATION CENTER**  
**Cropseyville, NY (Rensselaer  
County)**  
Sunday, June 20

Coordinator: Tom Williams  
857-2176.  
*No calls after 8 p.m., please.*  
trwdsd@yahoo.com

Dyken Pond, the primary headwaters for the Poestenkill, is located at an elevation of 1650 feet in the heart of the Rensselaer Plateau. The plateau is the fifth largest forested area in New York State. The Environmental Education Center offers six miles of trails through various habitats, including dense forests with remnant glacial boulders, boardwalks over open swamplands, and fern-lined creeks under mixed hardwoods and evergreens. Breeding birds on site here include: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireo, Winter Wren, Veery and Hermit Thrush, Scarlet Tanager, along with White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco. Warblers that breed here include Blackburnian, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Canada and Ovenbird.

This is a wet woodlands environment, so wear water-resistant footwear; good hiking boots will work just fine. Mosquitoes and other flying insects may be out in force, so bring appropriate defenses. Our group will explore portions of several different trails, in order to experience the diverse habitat, and in hopes of encountering as many birds as possible. From two trips last year we saw forty-six species.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Walmart Plaza on Route 7 (Hoosick St.) in Troy. We will gather near the first entrance, directly across the street from the Dunkin' Donuts. Parking at Dyken Pond EEC is somewhat limited, so we should consider carpooling if we have a big turnout.

**CHERRY PLAINS STATE PARK  
(Rensselaer County; morning)**

Saturday, June 26

Coordinators: Phil & Marge Whitney  
477-9050  
philandmarjwhitney@  
earthlink.net

Cherry Plains is situated on the Rensselaer Plateau of the Capital District. The relatively high elevation, cool climate and a variety of forested and wetland habitats make this a good area for northern species. Nesting species include Least Flycatcher, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Scarlet Tanager, Common Raven, Broad-winged Hawk, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Black and White and Yellow-rumped Warblers. Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Veery, Hermit Thrush and Winter Wren also nest here. Meet at 7:00 am at the Hannaford parking lot on the right side of Rt. 43 just past the intersection of Rt. 150 in West Sand Lake to carpool to the park.

**JULY****RESERVATIONS FOR BLUE  
MOUNTAIN**

Wednesday, July 7

**BLUE MOUNTAIN FOR  
BICKNELL'S THRUSH AND  
OTHERS**

**(Hamilton County; all day)**

Saturday, July 10

Coordinators: Bernie & Chris Grossman  
399-9159  
bgrossman@nycap.rr.com

We'll make a very early start for the 2 mile 1500 ft. moderate climb up Blue Mountain to look for and hear the rare Bicknell's Thrush. Other likely finds include other thrushes, vireos, warblers and Winter Wren. Boreal Chickadees may be a bonus. Good boots or shoes, a flashlight/headlamp, snacks and drinks and insect repellent are required. Contact the coordinators by Wednesday, July 7 for details and reservations.

**HOLLYHOCK HOLLOW  
SANCTUARY**

**(Albany County; morning)**

Saturday, July 17

Coordinator: Gary Goodness  
862-9260  
goodness@nycap.rr.com

Join us for birding, wildflowers and butterflies at the Audubon Society's Hollyhock Hollow Sanctuary at 46 Rarick Rd. in Selkirk. We will explore the trails of this 140-acre sanctuary of woodland, meadow, creek and garden habitats in search of local breeding birds. Bring your camera as the sanctuary provides a perfect setting for photographing flowers, hummingbirds and butterflies. Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the sanctuary.

## AUGUST

### RESERVATIONS FOR JAMAICA BAY

Thursday, August 12

### JAMAICA BAY NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE; SHOREBIRDS & MIGRANTS (Queens County; all day)

Sunday, August 15

Coordinator: Bernie Grossman  
399-9159  
bgrossman@nycap.rr.com

Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge is a premier stopping point for migrating shorebirds and passerines. High tide occurs at 1:33 p.m. on this day, so there may be time for a stop at Prospect Park or Floyd Bennett Field, too. High, waterproof boots are required. Carpooling is strongly recommended. Contact the coordinator for arrangements.

## SEPTEMBER

### HAWK WATCHING AND SONGBIRDS IN THE HELDERBERG ESCARPMENT #1 PINNACLE

Saturday, September 11

Coordinator: Gary Goodness  
862-9260  
goodness@nycap.rr.com

We'll first explore the trails of Camp Pinnacle for fall migrants, then head out to "Sunset" the hawk-watching site to search the skies for Broad-winged Hawks and other migrating raptors. Meet in front of the bank at the southwest corner of Routes 20 & 155 in Guilderland at 8:00 a.m.

### HAWK WATCHING AND SONGBIRDS IN THE HELDERBERG ESCARPMENT #2 HIGH POINT

Saturday, September 18

Coordinator: Gary Goodness  
862-9260  
goodness@nycap.rr.com

We will bird our way out to the hawk watching area, looking for migrating passerines along the 1.5-mile trail out to High Point. There, we will look for Broad-winged Hawks and other migrating raptors. Meet in front of the bank at the southwest corner of Routes 20 & 155 in Guilderland at 8:00 a.m.

## VISCHER FERRY FALL MIGRANTS

(Saratoga County; morning)

Saturday, September, 26

Coordinator: John Hershey  
371-3114  
hersheyj@nycap.rr.com

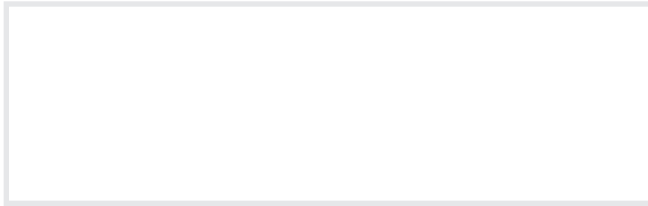
Fall migrants are the main attraction for this field trip. Species that breed further north or in higher elevations may stop here on their way south. This sometimes provides a better chance to see them than on their breeding territories. We will search for a variety of waterfowl, raptors, kinglets, sparrows and warblers. Although far from guaranteed, some of the species that occasionally have been seen this time of year here include Philadelphia Vireo, Swainson's Thrush, Winter Wren, Wilson's Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow. Meet at the preserve entrance at 8:30 a.m.

**Feathers**

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club  
c/o Five Rivers EEC  
Game Farm Road  
Delmar, NY 12054

NON-PROFIT ORG  
US POSTAGE PAID  
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Telephone/Home \_\_\_\_\_ Business \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU!

Please make check payable to: **Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club, Inc.**  
and mail with this form to:  
**HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB, INC.**  
Dan Welch, Membership Chair  
c/o TSV  
700 Columbia Turnpike  
East Greenbush, NY 12061

Any number of household  
members may be included in a  
single membership

Student \$ 6.00  
Active (Household) \$ 20.00  
Sustaining \$ 30.00  
Life \$ 250.00 (payable in two annual payments of \$125.00 each)

**Membership Category**

(Please circle one category)

We wish to apply for a membership in the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club Inc., as indicated below:

**MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Have you borrowed this copy of *Feathers* from someone else? Why not become a member? Or, are you a member who has overlooked your membership renewal?

**Join HMBC/Renew Your Membership**