

Feathers

BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE HUDSON-MOHAWK BIRD CLUB, INC.

WHY FEEDING BIRDS SUDDENLY COSTS SO MUCH

by Ad Crable

The immensely popular pastime of feeding the birds in backyards will be more expensive this season.

Right about now is the time most people lug home those big bags of birdseed to stock backyard feeders and settle in for a feathered spectacle that continues through winter.

Skyrocketing cost of birdseed

Be forewarned: The cost of all types of birdseed, from sunflower seed to suet, from safflower to Nyjer seed — even wild bird mix — it's all up drastically from last year.

At Backyard Birding Co. in East Petersburg, owner Mark Wilkerson has seen the prices of various birdseed raised by his suppliers no less than five times since last year.

"They're commodities and they go up and down. But I've never seen it like this before," says Wilkerson, who's owned birding specialty stores here for 20 years.

At E.M. Herr Farm and Home Center, south of Willow Street, store organizers say they may not be able to afford to hold their traditional fall birdseed sale.

And one has to wonder: Is the cost of watching birds dining outside home windows about to become so steep — 30-to 40-percent increases for some seeds — that there will be fewer handouts for the birds this winter? That would be unfortunate for both humans and avians.

There are reasons for the cost of birdseed flicking upward like a gas station marquee. Several of them.

The demand for corn and other grains for use as an alternative fuel is one reason. The push for ethanol makes corn more valuable. Also, farmers are more likely to grow crops for biofuels and less for the birdseed market.

The anti trans-fats trend is another factor. Frito Lay, for example, no longer cooks its potato chips in vegetable oils, switching instead entirely to sunflower oil. That, too, drives up the price of sunflower seeds. Black sunflower seeds (not the harder-to-crack striped variety) are the most popular birdseed of all.

Then there is the spiraling cost of petroleum. Both E.M. Herr and Wilkerson pay a fuel surcharge to suppliers, who deliver birdseed to the stores by diesel trucks from as far away as Minnesota.

"Customers say, 'Why is the price so high?' I say, 'How much are you paying for gas?'" reports Tena Kreider, who heads E.M. Herr's animal feed supplies.

— continued on Page 88

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P R E S I D E N T ' S C O R N E R



This winter is shaping up to be a good one for winter bird invasions. A huge flight of pine siskins has occurred with birds turning up as far south as Georgia. White-winged crossbills are also moving in large numbers and are being reported in Maryland. Keep your eye out, too, for snowy owls. A sick, emaciated youngster was rescued from the Hudson River shore the weekend of November 16 by two Club members. Hot spots like the Fort Edward and Coxsackie Grasslands, Partridge Run and Cherry

Plains will be good to visit to look for these invaders. Check HMBirds and Birdingonthe.net for daily updates

A couple of years ago, the Club's Board voted to publish the field trip schedule on a quarterly or so schedule. The Field Trip Committee had reported that it was having difficulties finding leaders, etc., for trips scheduled a year in advance. Well, this experiment has not worked out, and the Club has returned to an annual scheduling. The 2009 plan has been included in this Feathers mailing.

My thanks go out to Donna Zimmerman, committee chair, and the members who helped her put the schedule together. Field trips are one of the Club's core activities, and this would have been lost without their efforts.

The three Club-sponsored Christmas counts are another core activity. I urge all members to check out the count dates and other information on the Club's website (www.hmhc.net) and to then contact a count leader to participate. It's a lot of fun, and the post-count cocoa tastes great and helps you thaw out.

The Board has also decided to move the membership re-enlistment mailing to the February Feathers issue. It is hoped that the notice will be less likely to be lost in the year end/holiday activity.

Finally, my best wishes to all Club members and friends for a happy and good birding New Year.

— *Bernie Grossman* 

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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

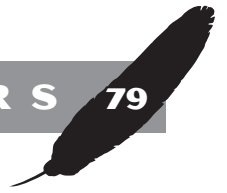
- Have anything you think other birders would be interested in?
- Have a favorite birding spot you want to share?
- Are there any stories or photos that would inspire others?

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

Send **all** paper submissions to:

Chris Grossman
7 Nott Rd.
Rexford, NY 12148



Looking for a Holiday gift for a birder? Two local stores offer great gifts.

Backyard Birds, located in the Peter Harris Plaza on Rt 7 in Latham, offers feeders (including eco-friendly ones made of recycled plastic), suet, bird houses, bird guides, and much more. (www.birdfeedershop.com or 518-690-2055)

Wild Birds Unlimited Nature Shop, located at The Shoppes at Wilton on Rt 50 in Saratoga Springs, has feeders, children's nature-related toys, suet, binoculars (including Vortex and Eagle Optics sold at Internet prices), spotting scopes, and Tilly hats, among other items. (<http://saratogasprings.wbu.com> or 518-226-0253)

A LETTERMAN-TYPE LIST OF COOL BIRD NAMES

While updating the life list at the end of the year, I started noticing some really cool names. We've seen all of these guys, in addition to lots of others including some Caciques and Pihas, the Hawfinch and Chawfinch, Chiffchaff and Whinchat, Ruffs and Choughs, 3 Motmots, the Great Kiskadee, the Violaceous Trogon, and the White-Crested Coquette. I believe most of these names are up to date, but some of the spellings may be a bit odd.

Anyhow, here are the top 10 bird names that we've seen. Please add some of your own.

The Top Ten Cool Bird Names on Our Life List

10. **Montezuma Oropendula** - a big oriole we saw in Costa Rica.
9. **Gyrffalcon** - we're never sure if it's gearfalcon, gyrfalcon, jeerfalcon, or jyrefalcon.
8. **Puerto Rican Stripe-Headed Tanager** - the longest named (34 characters) bird on our list. Beats out the Northern Beardless Tyrannulet by 5 characters.
7. **Resplendent Quetzal** - we've always wondered what a quetzal that wasn't resplendent would look like.
6. **Hoopoe** - a great name for a great looking bird.
5. **Phainopepla** - the Arizonan silky flycatcher.
4. **Pyrrhuloxia** - the cardinal-like guy from the southwest.
3. **Great Tit** - we've also seen three other tits and a brown booby.
2. **Plain Chachalaca** - the chicken-like bird from the Rio Grande Valley.

And for Number 1 (the envelope please):

1. **The Zitting Cisticola** - an inconspicuous LBJ (Little Brown Jobber) type European warbler. Cisticola is a cool enough word, but what does Zitting mean?

— Larry and Mona Rogers 

Object: Answer the question at the end of the quiz.
But first go thru each of the steps below to determine the target species.

Scope: Regularly-occurring ABA birds only (Codes 1-3).

Answers: On page 85

STEP 1: Four clues, guess the four species.

There should be enough information to determine uniquely four species, one for each clue.

- Buffy neck and head, thin upturned bill.
- Mostly a southwestern bird, purple-blue, extremely long tail.
- Common open salt water, both coasts, white head patches, heavy triangular bill.
- Mostly a western bird, orange collar, orange rump, yellow underwing.

STEP 2: Four species, determine four letters.

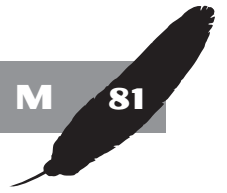
For each of the four species that you identified above, in the same order as the clues above, determine one letter from each species:

- 1st letter of last name
- 2nd letter of last name
- 3rd letter of last name
- 4th letter of last name

QUESTION: Four letters, determine the final clue to this species.

The four letters that you determined in the previous step should be sufficient to determine the identity of this one final target species. This species does, in fact, occur regularly within the HMBC region and is one of my favorites. Although I don't often get to actually see it!

Good luck! 



“We are delighted to announce that a special exhibition on our Breeding Bird Atlas opened on October 3 in the NYS Museum in Albany. The exhibit is called “Mapping the Birds of New York” —The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State. (<http://www.nysm.nysed.gov/exhibits/special/BreedingBirdAtlas.cfm>)

Kevin McGowan and Kimberley Corwin (the editors of the soon-to-be published book) provided information, maps, artwork and guidance to the museum staff as they designed the exhibit. It features original artwork from 15 artists, and professionally prepared display panels describing the Atlas project and showing a sampling of the results.

The description appearing on the Museum website follows:

“Of the more than 450 bird species that have been seen in New York, about 245 nest here. The New York State Breeding Bird Atlas projects have mapped where each of those species breeds in the state. The Blue Jay, for example, nests all across New York, but the Gray Jay breeds only in the Adirondacks. The second Breeding Bird Atlas project has just

been completed, and the new distribution maps reveal how our breeding birds have fared in the 20 years since the first Atlas was printed. Is the distribution of the Purple Martin shrinking? Is the distribution of the Carolina Wren expanding? Learn the answers in this exhibition, which highlights the forthcoming publication, The Second Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State. The exhibition includes original artwork from the book, bird mounts, and stories of how the Atlas fieldwork was accomplished.”

Museum hours are 9:30 am to 5 pm daily, and the exhibition will be shown through May 1. Entrance to the museum and the exhibits is free.

In other news, Cornell University Press featured the upcoming publication of the Atlas book on the cover of their Fall catalog. The book will be available for purchase in December. Later this month a special mailing from CUP offering a pre-publication discount will be sent to all who volunteered for the Atlas project. We will also make it available through NYSBirds-l@cornell.edu list serve.

— Kevin McGowan 

H M B C F I E L D T R I P R E P O R T S

Vischer Ferry Preserve Sunday, September 28, 2008

Despite an overcast sky and warnings of showers, eleven optimistic birders arrived for this field trip. We started out by walking an eastern loop from the main entrance. From a vantage point along the Mohawk River we spotted a GREAT EGRET. A few of us got to see a fairly uncommon sight at the Preserve: 5 juvenile YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKERS. Probably the favorite bird in this part of the trip was a SOLITARY SANDPIPER along the canal which allowed close looks for all. Later along the towpath west of the Whipple Bridge some of us were pleasantly surprised to see a PHILADELPHIA VIREO, and we were able to get a lone RUSTY BLACKBIRD in the scope after hearing its “rusty gate” song.

Other species for the trip included WOOD DUCK, BLUE and GREEN-WINGED TEAL, GREAT BLUE HERON, GREEN HERON, PILEATED WOODPECKER, CAROLINA WREN, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, and WHITE-THROATED SPARROW. Altogether we counted 37 species and not one drop of rain for the morning.

—John Hershey

Saratoga Battlefield Saturday, October 18, 2008

Another year, another bright, beautiful Saturday at the Saratoga Battlefield! We have been very lucky with the weather for this field trip so far.

This year about a dozen participants joined us at the Battlefield for a morning bird walk. This site is beautiful at any time of the year, but it really out-does itself in the fall. The bright blue October sky contrasts beautifully with the brilliant oranges, reds and golds of the leaves, which seemed to be at their peak of autumn color.

There were 24 species of birds observed in the fields and woods. Among these were PILEATED, HAIRY, DOWNY, and RED-BELLIED WOODPECKERS and FLICKER, quite a few individual EASTERN BLUEBIRDS (at least 5), YELLOW-RUMPED and PINE WARBLERS, HERMIT THRUSH, FOX SPARROW, and RED-EYED VIREO. A somewhat distant, young FIELD SPARROW had the group guessing for quite a while, but finally showed enough of itself to reveal its identity.

Thanks to all the people who participated in this trip, and we hope to continue the tradition of perfect fall weather next year!

—Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner



Fall Social at Five Rivers Sunday, October 26, 2008

After a cold heavy rain the day before, we were rewarded by an absolutely beautiful clear and relatively warm mid-autumn day on Sunday October 26 for the Club's second annual Fall Social at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center.

Bird species (31) roughly equaled the number of enthusiastic participants, who headed out at 1:00 in two groups, led by Alan Mapes and David Martin, respectively.

Species recorded included PILEATED, RED-BELLIED, DOWNY, and HAIRY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN HARRIER, RED-TAILED HAWK, BROWN CREEPER, RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET, COMMON GRACKLE, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, and CEDAR WAXWING. Perhaps the 3 PINE SISKINS near the parking lot were a sign of things to come for winter finches! A particular highlight that one of the groups had was the WINTER WREN, found and identified by John Hershey and seen by some folks, along the north leg of the Service Road Loop.

The birding groups then ended up at the pavilion and fire-place up the road from the bat barn, where people enjoyed hot chocolate and hot dogs, courtesy of the HMBC, along with a variety of other foods brought by generous participants.

We were done before dark, and folks who stayed seemed to have had a great time, despite the low numbers of birds.

Note – the Fall Social in 2009 will be in December, in conjunction with the return of the Campfire and Owling trip to the schedule!

—Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner



Tomhannock Reservoir Saturday, November 8, 2008

Fifteen participants gathered on a warm and cloudy day for this year's annual Tomhannock Reservoir trip. We had light rain on the second half of the trip, but this didn't dampen our spirits.

Before crossing Route 7 to view the waterfowl in the southern portion of the reservoir, one participant looked up to spot an adult BALD EAGLE perched in the evergreens across the road. It was there in front of our eyes, but most of us were busy looking at the water instead of elsewhere! Ducks seen south of Route 7 were mostly COMMON and HOODED MERGANSERS and RUDDY DUCKS, but we also found a group of female-plumaged BUFFLEHEADS and a few COMMON GOLDENEYES and RING-NECKED DUCKS. Along the shoreline was one GREAT BLUE HERON, while a few DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS swam among the ducks and geese. North of Route 7 we saw the first of some three COMMON LOONS, but little else.

We then saddled up and car-pooled around the reservoir in five cars. Our first stop on Nortonville Road, we were able to see the COMMON LOON a little better on the west side of the road and a large mixed flock of mergansers to the east. At Otter Creek, we saw an AMERICAN BLACK DUCK and a small group OF GREEN-WINGED TEAL in with the MALLARDS.

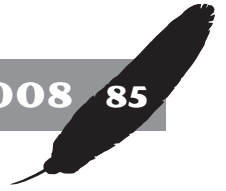
At the spillway on the north end of the reservoir, we searched the large flock of CANADA GEESE for a Cackling Goose, but to no avail. Near the pump station, we had a CAROLINA WREN respond to a Screech Owl tape and give everybody good looks. Further up the road, near a house with feeders, we hit the jackpot with a BROWN CREEPER, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET, and a very late BLACKPOLL WARBLER! We were able to see the pale yellow legs and feet of the warbler to clinch the ID.

Another good stop at an open field along Ford Road turned up NORTHERN FLICKER, HAIRY WOODPECKER, and a heard-only PILEATED WOODPECKER, but a flock of possible Pine Siskins turned out to be only GOLD-FINCHES. Further on, we encountered a HUGE flock of blackbirds consisting of mostly COMMON GRACKLES with a few RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS and EUROPEAN STARLINGS amongst them. A final stop along Lakeshore Road gave us a few EASTERN BLUEBIRDS.

While we tallied up the list at the parking area at the end of the trip, sharp eyes spotted a first-year HERRING GULL in with a growing flock of RING-BILLS. We were a little short on sparrows again, and we saw no winter finches. Overall, a total of 42 species was a little below average.

Here are the 42 species we saw: CANADA GOOSE, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, MALLARD, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, RING-NECKED DUCK, BUFFLEHEAD, COMMON GOLDENEYE, HOODED MERGANSER, COMMON MERGANSER, RUDDY DUCK, COMMON LOON, DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT, GREAT BLUE HERON, BALD EAGLE, RED-TAILED HAWK, RING-BILLED GULL, HERRING GULL, ROCK PIGEON, MOURNING DOVE, DOWNY WOODPECKER, HAIRY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, PILEATED WOODPECKER, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, BROWN CREEPER, CAROLINA WREN, GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET, EASTERN BLUEBIRD, AMERICAN ROBIN, EUROPEAN STARLING, BLACKPOLL WARBLER, WHITE-THROATED SPARROW, DARK-EYED JUNCO, NORTHERN CARDINAL, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH, HOUSE SPARROW.

—Larry Alden 



Due to the wet weather and low participants, this year's Fall Century Run yielded only 58 species. Among this list, though, were several interesting species including a banded BALD EAGLE, 3 BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERONS, YELLOW-THROATED VIREO, and BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER. Other species included AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, WILD TURKEY, GREAT EGRET, OSPREY, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, SOLITARY SANDPIPER,

GREATER and LESSER YELLOWLEGS, SEMIPALMATED AND LEAST SANDPIPERS, HERRING GULL, RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD, BELTED KINGFISHER, EASTERN WOOD-PEWEE, LEAST FLYCATCHER, WARBLING VIREO, CHESTNUT-SIDED WARBLER, YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER, BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER, BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER, AND AMERICAN REDSTART.

—Hope Batcheller 

Here are the clues and the answers to the HMBC Quiz from page 80.

STEP 1: *Four clues, guess the four species.*

- *Buffy neck and head, thin upturned bill*

AMERICAN AVOCET

- *Mostly a southwestern bird, purple-blue, extremely long tail*

GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE

- *Common open salt water, both coasts, white head patches, heavy triangular bill*

SURF SCOTER

- *Mostly a western bird, orange collar, orange rump, yellow underwing*

BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK

STEP 2: *Four species, determine four letters.*

1st letter of last name - A

2nd letter of last name - R

3rd letter of last name - O

4th letter of last name - S

QUESTION: *Four letters, determine the final clue to this species.*

Rearranging the letters, we end up with **SORA**.

Monthly programs are open to the public and are held at 7:00 PM at William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library or Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar.

Yellowstone (and why we keep going back)

Gary Zylkuski and Adrienne Papazian

Monday, January 5, 2009

7:00 PM at the William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

Many of us get to visit Yellowstone once or twice, if we are lucky. Gary and Adrienne have taken many, many trips there - and continue to go back. During their slide program, they show what keeps their trips to Yellowstone interesting and different no matter how many times they go. The first portion of the program will consist of photos and a discussion of some of the highlights that would likely be seen during any Yellowstone visit: the scenery, animals, birds, etc. that are seen by the casual visitor. Then, the bulk of the program delves into what they have discovered as they visit more often and during different seasons, focusing more on certain areas within the Park or certain animals or birds. We'll try to show what happens when you slow down and resist the temptation to try to see everything all at once. The photos cover a myriad of subjects from animals and birds to mountain scenery and thermal features, during all four seasons. Yellowstone's animals and birds are shown as portraits, as well as exhibiting different behaviors from predator-prey interactions to nesting and raising young. Topics we'll discuss range from wolf reintroduction to nesting behavior of sandhill cranes to physical differences between grizzlies and black bears.

Gary grew up in northeastern Massachusetts and graduated from Lyndon State College in Vermont in 1980, with a degree in Meteorology. He has been a marine meteorologist for the past 28 years, working with commercial and private vessels worldwide, and an avid birder for the last 20 years. Gary and his wife Adrienne share a strong interest in all aspects of the natural world. Over the past 10 years or so, their interest in photography has complemented their enjoyment in observing nature.

Come and join us for this unusual and in-depth look at our nation's first national park.

The Whooping Cranes of Aransas Texas

Don Polunci

Monday, February 2, 2009

7:00 PM at the William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

One of the rarest creatures in North America, the whooping crane is making a comeback from a low of 15 birds in 1941. Whooping cranes nest in Canada during the summer and winter at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge. Strong winds push the bay waters over low-lying shores, forming brackish tidal marshes among the short, salt-tolerant vegetation. It is this habitat that attracts thousands of migratory birds. On their journey between North and Central America, warblers concentrate on the refuge from mid-April to early May. Mild winters, bay waters, and abundant food supplies attract over 392 species of birds to Aransas, including pelicans, herons, egrets, spoonbills, shorebirds, ducks, and geese.

Don Polunci is president of the Southern Adirondack Audubon Society. He taught art/photography at Glens Falls High School for more than 30 years. He has exhibited his work in a wide variety of venues. Don has won numerous awards including :Adirondack Balloon Festival Photography Contest, "Ding" Darling Wildlife Center, Adirondack Camera Club, Saratoga National Park Photo Contest, and was a Finalist in the National Wildlife Calendar Contest.



The Great Texas Birding Classic

Hope Batcheller

Monday, March 2, 2009

7:00 PM at the William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

Twenty-four hours, four teenage birders, and 195 bird species. It was crazy, yes, and a fantastic experience. The Great Texas Birding Classic is a competitive birding event taking place annually on the Texas coast. Hope Batcheller competed on the 2008 ABA/Leica Tropicbirds team, which was raising money for the American Birding Association's education programs. During the team's four days in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, they experienced the diverse birdlife of south Texas. The area not only boasts species whose primary range is in Mexico, but also migrant passerines and coastal birds. Through stories and photos, Hope will share her adventures from this incredible trip.

Hope Batcheller is 16 years old, and already a very active member of the HMBC. She has been a birder since age seven. Hope has benefited from most of the ABA's youth education programs, and played an active role in starting the NY State Young Birders Club, and originator and organizer of the HMBC's Fall Century Run.

HMBC's Annual Banquet and Meeting

Wednesday April 22, 2009

Club members will receive a special mailing in March with details of the dinner.

Our Planet's Birding Extremes: Antarctica to the Arctic Circle

Don and Donna Traver.

From Andean Condors in Southern Chile's fabled national park, Torres del Paine to an Emperor Penguin colony on Snow Hill Island in Antarctic and then north to Spitsbergen above the Arctic Circle with stops along the way in the tropics, the British Isles and Siberia this program will provide an overview of places and habitats that the adventure traveler may consider visiting to observe the diverse wildlife of our planet.

Many HMBC members will recall that Don and Donna Traver have recently completed a quest to see at least one species from each Family of birds in the world. They have been our Club's guests at a number of programs over the past half dozen years, recounting their birding adventures from all parts of the globe!

Don and Donna both graduated from SUNY Cortland 1959 as Physical Education Majors, and both obtained Masters Degrees from SUNY Brockport. Donna was a Physical Education teacher in Pittsford Central Schools for 31 years, while Don taught Science and coached wrestling in Webster. They have been avid birders for many years and active in local clubs; Donna is Past President of Rochester Birding Association and Don is Past President of Genesee Ornithological Society.

Together, Donna and Don have seen over 700 species of North American birds and over 5,000 species in the world. They started their bird families quest in 1994 needing 35 more of the world's 204 families (Clements pre-2008 taxonomy). This endeavor was completed in August 2006 in Sierra Leone, West Africa. Recently, they have worked with the Town of Webster in preserving vital migratory bird habitat near Lake Ontario on newly acquired Open Space Lands.

Come and enjoy a great meal and stay to hear Donna and Don recount their birding adventures from Antarctica to the Arctic Circle!

Birding in East Australia from Tasmania to Cairns

Don Morton

Monday, May 4, 2009

More details soon. 

There, the cost of black sunflower seed has shot up from \$18.99 for a 50-pound bag last fall to \$26.99 for a smaller 40-pound bag. Nyjer seed has risen by \$7 per 50 pounds; safflower by \$8 per 50 pounds and wild bird mix by \$2 per 20-pound bag. Even fat-laden suet cakes, which include corn and sunflower seeds, are up from 79 cents last year to \$1.29.

Similar price hikes are reported at other area stores that carry birdseed.

Sometimes, prices fall slightly after fall harvests, so slight relief could be coming.

But the cost of feeding the birds has gone from a cheap thrill to a serious budget item.

The switchover is occurring as birdfeeding has grown to unprecedented popularity. It's now the second-most popular hobby among Americans, after gardening.

In Pennsylvania, an estimated 3.6 million residents — close to one-third the state's population — feed birds, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

So ubiquitous are birdfeeders that they have enabled that the common house finch to spread beyond its native range in the southwestern United States to almost coast to coast since 1940.

The northern cardinal, blue jay and Carolina wren are found farther north than they used to be, largely because of feeders.

However, despite what some believe, feeding the birds is more about pleasing humans than helping birds survive. Except for the harshest weather, most birds are capable of finding food on their own in the wild.

“Normally, the birds of winter in this area are here because there is an ample food supply for them,” observes Frank Haas, of Narvon, author of the “Pennsylvania Birds” field guide.

Haas intends to continue to buy around 700 pounds of birdseed each year to keep birds fluttering to his eight hanging feeders and one platform feeder all year round.

“More than anything else, birdfeeders attract a large number of birds to one area and give us the pleasure of looking at them,” he says.

“You know who this is going to hit — older people on fixed incomes,” says Bob Schutsky, of Peach Bottom, owner of the Bird Treks bird-tour company. “This is one of their sources of entertainment.”

Wilkerson sees some customers cutting back on how much birdseed they buy, or buying cheaper varieties, for example, choosing a wild bird mix instead of sunflower chips.

On a bird forum on the Internet about cheaper alternatives to birdseed, someone suggested buying packages of dried fruit found in grocery stores. Other inexpensive choices are cooked rice and noodles (Ramen Noodles, made in Lancaster County by Nissin Foods, is one of the cheapest varieties.)

Haas makes his own suet, among the cheapest forms of healthy food that attracts birds to feeders. The ingredients: lard (Haas buys it in 5-pound tubs in grocery stores), crunchy peanut butter, wheat germ, flour, rolled oats, Rice Krispies cereal and anything else that strikes his fancy.

Put everything in a big mixer bowl, mix and put the material in a plastic container and place it in the refrigerator to harden.

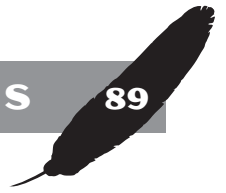
Haas has a hanging log with 2-inch holes drilled in, which he fills with the suet. The suet attracts titmice, chickadees, woodpeckers, nuthatches and others.

Whatever you do, don't put out large quantities of bread crumbs, local birders preach. Bread is not nutritional and will only fill the gullets of birds with material that won't help keep them warm or healthy.

Casual birdfeeders might be balking at sticker shock on birdseed. But Wilkerson predicts most of his customers will tighten their belts for the birds.

“They enjoy their birds and have waited for it for a year and are going to continue to feed them.”

Ad Crable is staff writer with the Lancaster New Era of East Petersburg, Pennsylvania. The article was originally published in the September 16, 2008 edition of the Lancaster New Era, and is reprinted with the permission of Ernie Schwaber, editor. E-mail: acrable@LNPnews.com



*Unless Otherwise Specified, All Programs To Be Held At:
William K. Sanford Colonie Town Library
629 Albany-Shaker Road, Loudonville, NY 12211
2nd Thursday Of Every Month, Monthly: September - June
From 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm*

The Canadian Atlantic

Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

Thursday December 13, 2008

7:00 PM at the William K. Sanford (Colonie) Town Library

Joint program of the Audubon Society of the Capital Region and the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

From the Gannets of Bonaventure Island, to the tides of Fundy and the Highlands of Cape Breton; across the sea to the fjords, bogs and icebergs of Newfoundland and Labrador, Atlantic Canada is a land of spectacular scenery and wildlife. With slides and music we share the wonders that draw us to that special place.

Scott Stoner is past president of both the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club and the Audubon Society of the Capital Region. His photographic work has been published in Birder's World Magazine. Denise Hackert-Stoner is a past officer and director of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. Together they have birded, explored, and photographed North America from Hawaii to Labrador. They write a monthly birding/nature column for the Chatham Courier and recently authored a feature article on Christmas Bird Counts for the New York State Conservationist. 

B A L D E A G L E S A T C O H O E S F A L L S

“Second only to Niagara — Cohoes Falls, also known as the Great Falls of the Mohawk, is one of the largest waterfalls east of the Rocky Mountains. The Mohawk River plunges nearly a hundred feet here, a navigation obstacle to early explorers, before emptying into the Hudson River. The falls have been regarded as a landmark, a sacred site, a scenic wonder, and a source of power for generations.

— U.S. Government, Department of the Interior

Last year, these majestic falls at Cohoes proved to be a prime observation area for Bald Eagles in our region. The count of Bald Eagles, both immature and adult, peaked at 22 birds last year about January 6th. Last year for the first time, the hydroelectric plant at the falls began reducing the amount of flow being diverted away from the falls. Areas that were formerly dry are now shallows filled with fish, and hungry young eagles are drawn in search of an easy meal.

Peter Nye, head of endangered species unit at the state Department of Environmental Conservation, commented, “This is not a nesting situation. These are likely eagles that are wintering over from Canada, that are looking for habitat and a food supply to survive.”

To visit one good vantage point for observing these birds, follow Interstate 787 north to its end. take a slight left on New Cortland Street. Proceed 0.2 miles, then continue straight onto North Mohawk Street. Proceed for 0.6 mi, then turn right on School Street. There is a park overlooking the falls at the intersection of School Street and Cataract Street.

Once again the Upcoming Field Trips for the year and the Upcoming Field Trips Quick List are included as separate sheets. Please consider volunteering to lead a trip in the future.

DECEMBER 2008

Saturday, December 20
Schenectady County Christmas Bird Count
Saturday, December 27
Southern Rensselaer County Christmas Bird Count

JANUARY 2009

Thursday, January 1
NEW YEAR BIRD COUNT AT FIVE RIVERS
(morning)

Coordinator: Craig Thompson
 475-0291(daytime)

For the past 20+ years, Five Rivers has been welcoming in the New Year with an organized effort to identify all the bird species present on January 1st. This also marks the start of their annual bird list. Again this year, HMBC joins the event and encourages members to participate. Groups will go out at 9:00 am from the Interpretive Building (visitor center), but birders are welcome to arrive earlier to get a head start. Call ahead to Five Rivers in case of inclement weather.

Saturday, January 3, 2009
Troy Christmas Bird Count

Saturday, January 10
Reservations needed for
Winter Rare Bird Trip (January or February)

January or February
WINTER RARE BIRD TRIP (full day)
 Coordinator: Bill Lee 374-3426 bileej@hotmail.com

If any especially rare bird is reported in our general area, we plan to take a trip to look for it. This is usually a day trip, but sometimes requires an overnight stay. To get on the notification list for alert & trip details, contact the coordinator. In recent years, participants have seen Thick-billed Murre, Eared Grebe and Boreal Owl.

Saturday, January 24
ANNUAL STATE WATERFOWL COUNT
(morning/full day)

Coordinator: Gary Goodness 862-9680
goodness@nycap.rr.com

On the local segment of this statewide event, participants will count waterfowl and other birds on the Hudson River between North Troy and Hudson Falls. Meet at 8:30 am in the Hannaford parking lot on the east end of the North Troy-Waterford Bridge (NY Rt. 4)

Saturday, January 24
Reservations needed for
Birding by Snowshoe at Five Rivers

Sunday, January 25
CHAMPLAIN VALLEY; ESSEX COUNTY (full day)
 Coordinator: Bill Lee 374-3426
bileej@hotmail.com

The fields & farmlands of the Essex Triangle near Wadhams, Westport, Whallonsburg & Essex can host wintering raptors, redpolls, shrikes, Bohemian Waxwings, crossbills and a variety of winter finches. Open water on nearby Lake Champlain provides opportunities to view loons, grebes, waterfowl and gulls. While invasion & irruption winters and the abundance of the natural food supply can't be predicted, the variety of habitats and the natural beauty of the landscape provide a memorable birding experience. Call the coordinator by Wed. January 21 for meeting place and time and to coordinate carpooling.

Sat January 31
BIRDING BY SNOWSHOE AT FIVE RIVERS
(morning)

Joint trip with the Audubon Society of the Capital Region
 Coordinator: Craig Thompson 475-0291(daytime)
president@capitalregionaudubon.org

Some would claim that snowshoeing is nothing more than exaggerated walking and some would claim that winter birding is nothing more than exaggerated ornithology! Join Five Rivers Director Craig Thompson for a special outing as we meet at the Visitor Center at 8:30 am for a brief introduction to snowshoeing, then strap on the waffle stompers and go over the meadow & through the woods in search of winter specialties. There is a good chance of seeing Eastern Bluebirds. Compilation over hot chocolate afterwards. Snowshoes are available at Five Rivers for those who need them. Reservations are needed by January 24 by contacting Five Rivers or e-mailing the director.

FEBRUARY**Sunday, February 8****FORT EDWARD & FORT MILLER
(afternoon thru dusk)**Coordinator: Gregg Recer 899-2678
gregg.recer@verizon.net

Short-eared Owls are seen most winters in the Fort Edward Grasslands, an Important Bird Area in Washington County. Wintering hawks, including Rough-leggeds, Red-tails, Northern Harrier and perhaps a Bald Eagle or Peregrine Falcon are another feature of this area, as are wintering field birds such as Horned Lark, Snow Bunting and possibly Lapland Longspur or Northern Shrike. Depending on conditions on the river, we may also search for waterfowl along the Hudson in Ft. Miller. Meet at 12:30 PM in the park-and-ride lot in the Malta Business Park. Coming from the south on I-87 (the Northway), take Exit 12 and stay to the right, heading east on Rt. 67 toward Rt. 9. (from the north, go 3/4 around the traffic circle to head east on Rt. 67) At the next traffic circle after the highway, take the first right into the business park and turn right again to the parking area. This trip will practically be all car birding, but access can be limited in places, so we will need to carpool in as few cars as possible.

Saturday, February 14**MOHAWK RIVER/COHOES TO CRESCENT
(morning)**Coordinator: Bill Lee 374-3426
bileej@hotmail.com

This area, including Cohoes Falls & Simmons Island, offers a great opportunity to study the gulls & waterfowl that winter along the Mohawk River. We will look for Glaucous & Iceland Gulls usually present in small numbers in winter. This trip will be a good introduction to the many fine vantage points along the Mohawk. We will leave at 8:30 am from the U-Haul parking lot on Ontario St. (NY Rt. 470, 1/8 mile east of I-787) in Cohoes.

MARCH**Sunday, Mar 4****WATERFOWL OF THE HUDSON RIVER SOUTH
(morning)***Joint trip with Alan De Voe Bird Club*
Coordinator: Bill Cook 851-2678

On this spring morning waterfowl trip, we will search the Hudson River from Coxsackie to Catskill where the waterfowl usually congregate on their way north. Expect to see Canvasback, Goldeneyes & many more species. There is also a good chance of seeing Bald Eagle. Meet at 8:00 am at the Coxsackie boat launch site. Take the NYS Thruway to Exit 21B (Coxsackie - Rt. 9W), follow 9W south for about 2 miles to Rt. 385, go left (east) on Rt. 385 (Mansion St.) and continue straight to the Hudson River where the road bears left into the boat launch site.

Sunday, March 15**HUDSON RIVER ABOVE TROY (morning)**Coordinators: Joan Cipriani 374-3729
jlcip@nycap.rr.com

Peggy Rudis 371-5051

Early migrating waterfowl will be our primary objective on both the Hudson & Hoosic Rivers. We have, however, seen other specialties on previous trips. Possibilities include Bald Eagle, Northern Goshawk, Barnacle Goose, Snow Geese (including Blue Morph) as well as Bluebirds & Killdeer. Plan to meet at 8:00 am by the chain link fence at the Hanaford Plaza parking lot located at the east end of the North Troy-Waterford Bridge. Please call one of the coordinators if you plan to attend.

Sunday, March 29


WASHINGTON COUNTY WATERFOWL

(morning)

Joint trip with Southern Adirondack Audubon

Coordinators: Joyce Miller
justlookitup@yahoo.com

Mona Bearor 745-8637
conservebirds@gmail.com

Join us as we search the Hudson for migrant waterfowl such as Goldeneye, Bufflehead and mergansers. Last year, Canvasbacks & Tundra Swans were life birds for many. If time permits, we will also visit the Ft. Edward Grasslands for late winter specialties such as Rough-legged Hawk, Northern Harrier & Snow Bunting. We will meet at the Schuylerville Central School on Rt. 29 at 8:00 am to form a carpool. Dress warmly, bring a beverage/snack, your binoculars and a scope if you have one. Please contact one of the coordinators to register. 

Feathers

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

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FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED