

Feathers

A Vacation in Arizona With Some Occasional Birding *by Stanley Blanchard*

Feb. 27, 2009 *Phoenix*. The Sonoran Desert Museum produced a few new life birds for me. I was so frustrated at first because the large 8½ inch bird singing to us as we approached was jay like but not a jay. It was on top of a cactus with a long curved beak and a telltale white eye stripe, but I could not add up the obvious hints and make it into any bird that I could find. A half hour later I finally realized it as a CACTUS WREN! Lifer.

As we walked around the museum admiring the Gihooly glass that was on display among the cacti, (this is an outdoor museum) a guide pointed out a female ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD, lifer, and a nest of 2 chicks almost ready to fly. The nest couldn't have been more than an inch in diameter and the chicks were so stuffed into the nest that their feathers were bunched up around the nest's edges and they were more than 2 inches above the rim of the nest. Later we saw a male Anna's and he is a very brilliant guy with a deep purple throat and cap shimmering in the sun.

There was another bird that was warbler. The same guide called it a VERDIN but I had to force him to prove it to me because what I was looking at was much duller than the illustrations. After watching the VERDIN grab 2 inch long twigs for the nest I became more and more convinced that it must have been a VERDIN. I saw many VERDIN over the next two weeks but none of them came close to being as resplendent as the illustrations in Sibley's.

While at the museum I also saw the rather gray ROCK WREN, lifer, and the fairly common CURVED-BILLED THRASHER. Lifer.

February 28, 2009 Sedona. On our 5-mile hike to Doe Mesa, near Sedona, I spotted swallows flitting around in the sky showing a distinct white patch on the top of the

rump, which is the easy way to identify the VIOLET-GREEN SWALLOW.

March 1, 2009. Hike towards Cathedral Rock. It was a nice short hike along the river and the first thing I saw when I got out of the car was a phoebe like bird dart under the overhand of a small shed; black with a white belly and black eyes with a small black tuft on the crown and the fairly constant flicking of the tail. Another lifer, the BLACK PHOEBE. As we meandered up the Oak Creek River I kept hearing the call of a goldfinch and finally I spotted another lifer the Lesser Goldfinch.

March 2, 2009 Page Arizona. As I was doing research for our vacation I learned that the CALIFORNIA CONDOR had been released in the wilds of northern Arizona and I really wanted to see one because as a youth I had always been captivated by its mythic size and graceful flight. I have since learned that there are 82 of these 25 pound birds in and around the Grand Canyon of Arizona. They have been placed in Arizona in order to reduce the risk of losing the entire California population. It was my hope to see one this day.

While waiting for everyone to get up for breakfast I went out to the car to ready my tripod and camera, for we were going to Antelope Canyon and a tour of the famous slot canyon. I did get some wonderful photographs and our full, blooded Navajo guide, Angie, had done the tour so often that she knew all the best places to stand and photograph. It was wonderful.

Back to getting ready. There was a dove in the tree by the car and it was larger and lighter in color than our Mourning Dove. It was a EURASIAN COLLARED DOVE with a nice black collar behind the neck. Lifer. As we drove away from Page the quest was to

see a CALIFORNIA CONDOR that had been reestablished around Lee's Ferry, Arizona. We drove to the Colorado River at Lee's Ferry and saw a lot of ducks but I did not take the time away from my friends to scope them and figure them out. As we were passing the Navajo Bridge I saw two large birds on rocks by the information center and they were the CALIFORNIA CONDOR! You know as a birder you get used to looking for something that is not right when trying to spot a bird and those large black boulder sized things were out of place in the red rock terrain. They were a mature and a juvenile Condor with very prominent tags on each wing. My friend Denny took off with a pair of bins and like a true birder scanned the cliffs above the Colorado and lo there was another Condor on a ledge. I brought the scope over and we got a better look. They never did fly for us though, so I missed seeing the 10 foot wingspan.

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President's Corner



It was a proud moment at the 2009 Annual Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club meeting for me to accept the gavel for the 2009-10 HMBC year. My first experience with the HMBC was Sunday, Jan. 12, 1986, the annual State Duck Count. Walt Sabin was driving as he always did. Sam Madison was riding shotgun and I was invited to join; but the question was, "did I have a lunch?" My answer was yes and I had a seat in the back with Paul Grattan. I had no idea who these men were and I had no idea how much I was going to learn from them. They were the giants of the HMBC and they allowed me to come along and listen which is not standard operating procedure (SOP) for me. Walt, Sam and Paul no longer give me guidance, but I have a wonderful group of officers, directors and committee chairpersons that add support so we can continue to be one of the best bird clubs in the State. At the May 11th meeting we were able to propose a balanced budget only due to the revenue of 50 new members last year. We must review our membership and convince others to join our group. Without new members we will have difficulty maintaining our programs which are very popular. A slogan to remember: "If you want to see birds, you must have birds in your heart."

Best regards,

— Gary Goodness 

HMBC Contact Information

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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

December 20, 2008. Almost 10,500 birds of 62 species were tallied by the twenty observers in 8 field parties on the 2008 Schenectady Christmas Count, compared to 2007's 12,000 birds of 70 species. Snow falling the night before and most of Count day made for more difficult conditions afield and was most likely responsible for this year's low totals. No new species and only one new high count were recorded – Red-bellied Woodpecker, which continues to expand its range north and east, increased by more than 50% above last year to 32 from the previous high of 21. Double crested Cormorant was found for the third time and Glaucous Gull for the fourth time. Purple Finch and Pine Siskin were the only winter finches. Seen in Count week, but not on Count day were Common Goldeneye, Ruffed Grouse, and Short-eared Owl.

Time and Effort

5:30 am to 5:00 pm
20 observers in 8 field parties plus
4 feeder observers

Party hours and distance

20 hours and 18.5 miles by foot
41.75 hours and 390 miles by car
8 hours at feeders
3 hours and 17.5 miles owling

Weather

Temperature 10 – 18 degrees
Wind Northeast 5 – 7 mph
Snow Depth 7.0 – 14 inches
Still water – frozen, Moving water –
partly open
Skies – Cloudy with light snow, am and pm

Group A Bob Yunick, Ted Hicks, Tom Palmer

6:25 am – 4:00 pm
6 hours, 5 miles on foot
2 hours and 35 minutes, 35 miles by car
plus one hour and 2.5 miles owling

South shore of Mohawk River, Rexford Bridge to Colonie boat launch at Wide Waters, Balltown Road from Rexford Bridge to River Road, Rosendale Road to Old Niskayuna Railroad Station, Blatnick Park, Lock 7

40 species, Double-crested Cormorant, Red-shouldered Hawk, Swamp Sparrow, Brown-headed Cowbird

Group B Gregg Recer, Cathy Graichen

7:30 am – 4:00 pm
2 hours, 3 miles on foot
6.5 hours, 52 miles by car

Albany County Airport, Ann Lee Pond, Lake Rensselaer, Albany Landfill, portions of Pine Bush

27 species, Glaucous Gull

Group C Larry Alden

5:30 am – 5:00 pm
1.5 hours, 2 miles on foot
8 hours, 84 miles by car plus 1.5 hours and 12 miles owling

Meadowdale, Black Creek Marsh, portions of Altamont, Guelderland, and Voorheesville

38 species, Snow Goose

Group D Joan Cipriani, Peggy Rudis

7:10 am – 4:30 pm
2 hours, 1 mile on foot
6 hours, 20 minutes, 84 miles by car

Watervliet Reservoir, Glass Pond, portion of western Pine Bush, Guelderland

28 species, American Bald Eagle, Red-winged Blackbird

Group E Al Mapes, Jim Ries

8:00 am – 4:30 pm
0.5 hours, 0.5 miles on foot
7.5 hours, 42 miles by car, 0.5 hours and 3 miles owling

Settlers Hill, Bozenkill, portions of Black Creek and Watervliet Reservoir

33 species, American Kestrel, Pine Siskin

Group F Bill Lee, Janet Betlejeski, Stan Blanchard, Jaime Taft

7:00 am – 4:20 pm
2 hours, 2 miles on foot
5.3 hours, 57 miles by car

Vale Park and Cemetery, Mohawk River from Lock 8 to Gateway Landing, West Hill and portions of Princetown and Rotterdam to US Route 20 on north, NY Route 158 on east

36 species, Common Raven

Group G Carl George, Kathleen LoGuidice, Hank Stebbins

11:15 am – 4:30 pm
3 hours, 3 miles on foot
4 hour, 31 miles by car

Mohawk River, Scotia shore from Lock 8 to Freemans Bridge, Collins Creek and Lake, Maalwyck Park

29 species, Mute Swan

Group H Bernard and Christine Grossman, John Hershey

8:00 am – 3:00 pm
3 hours, 2 miles on foot
4 hours, 35 miles by car

Mohawk River, Freemans Bridge to Vischer Ferry, west of the Nature and Historic Preserve, Alplaus, Rexford, portions of Glenville and Clifton Park, south of Maple Ave, Grooms Road and Riverview Road

34 species, Northern Pintail

Group I Feeder Watchers

Don Gresens, Jean and
Samuel Katz, Ellen Pemrick,
Clifford Tepper

8 hours
22 species

Tabulation of the species observed follows on pages 32-33.

December 20, 2008

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
SNOW GOOSE	1									1
CANADA GOOSE	277	188	47	2	100	2	2	3		621
MUTE SWAN							1			1
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK	6		23			10	16			55
MALLARD	142	9	16			165	21	455		808
NORTHERN PINTAIL								1		1
COMMON GOLDENEYE										CW
HOODED MERGANSER	2							1		3
COMMON MERGANSER	48					2		18		68
RUFFED GROUSE										CW
WILD TURKEY	9				11		5			25
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT	1									1
GREAT BLUE HERON			1				6			7
BALD EAGLE							1*			1
NORTHERN HARRIER	1	1	1		1		1			5
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK	1				1	2				4
COOPER'S HAWK	1		1	1		1				4
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK	1									1
RED-TAILED HAWK	8	7	10	13	12	15	3	8		68
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK		1						1		2
AMERICAN KESTREL					1					1
RING BILLED GULL		1		2		1	9	1	1	15
HERRING GULL	1	250				2				253
GLAUCOUS GULL		1								1
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL		35				1				36
ROCK PIGEON	51	49	129	101	8	2	4	30	9	319
MOURNING DOVE	24	1	81	44	27	45	12	70	15	383
EASTERN SCREECH OWL	3		2			1				6
GREAT HORNED OWL			2			1				3
SHORT-EARED OWL										CW
BELTED KINGFISHER	1		1		1	1		1		5
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER	4	3	10	4	2	6	1		2	32
DOWNY WOODPECKER	24	3	18	5	8	4	4	8	4	78
HAIRY WOODPECKER	7	1	3	6	3	6	1	1	3	19
NORTHERN FLICKER			1		2			1		4
PILEATED WOODPECKER					2			1	2	5
BLUE JAY	31	11	20	21	35	20	4	25	4	171
AMERICAN CROW	69	301	54	179	28	953	249	276	7	2116

Schenectady Christmas Count 2008 — *continued*

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	Total
COMMON RAVEN						1				1
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	38	7	114	31	24	15	6	23	20	278
TUFTED TITMOUSE	23		22	7	12	5	6	11	20	106
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH							1		3	4
WHITE BREASTED NUTHATCH	23		13	3	6	5	3	3	7	63
CAROLINA WREN			1	1		3			1	6
WINTER WREN						1		1		2
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET	3		1					1		5
EASTERN BLUEBIRD	4		25	4	14	9		10		66
AMERICAN ROBIN	168		336	98	566	243	50	133		1594
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD	2	3	3	1				1		10
EUROPEAN STARLING	269	420	361	153	293	246	7	156	5	1,910
CEDAR WAXWING		1	13		2					16
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	10	7	12	10	18	22		4		83
SONG SPARROW	1	2	4	3	1	3		1		15
SWAMP SPARROW	1									1
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	16	1	49	27	24	15	8	7	2	149
DARK-EYED (SLATE-COLORED) JUNCO	19	41	76	25	47	35	5	20	18	286
SNOW BUNTING					1	60	18			79
NORTHERN CARDINAL	31	5	26	15	11	7	8	23	7	133
RED WINGED BLACKBIRD				1						1
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	6									6
PURPLE FINCH			1	1					4	6
HOUSE FINCH	27		9		64	13		1	7	121
PINE SISKIN					1					1
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	14	2	68	6	37	23	2	9	15	176
HOUSE SPARROW	12	3	55	2	3	8	22	70	27	202
TOTALS: 62 SPECIES, PLUS 3 COUNT WEEK	40	27	38	28	33	36	29	34	22	10,451

* the BALD EAGLE observed was an adult.

— Bill Lee 

Southern Rensselaer Christmas Count 2008

December 27, 2008

SPECIES	SECTOR	A	B	C	E	G	H	J	CIRCLE
CANADA GOOSE		247	1		10	25	24	2	309
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK							1		1
MALLARD		41	40		10	17	75		183
NORTHERN PINTAIL							2		2
COMMON MERGANSER		5	2				3		10
WILD TURKEY		6		27	7	26	34	72	172
BALD EAGLE		2					1		3
NORTHERN HARRIER							3		3
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK			3		1		2		6
COOPER'S HAWK		1	2	1			2		6
RED-TAILED HAWK		12	7	5	9	8	12	4	57
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK						1	2		3
MERLIN							2		2
PEREGRINE FALCON							2		2
RING-BILLED GULL		9	10			1	60		80
HERRING GULL		85	5			1	66	2	159
ICELAND GULL		1					1		2
GLAUCOUS GULL							1		1
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL		8	1				8		17
ROCK PIGEON		910	29	14		28	71	16	1068
MOURNING DOVE		30	55	54	9	26	21	24	219
BELTED KINGFISHER						3			3
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER		1	1	6		3	4	1	16
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER				1					1
DOWNY WOODPECKER		6	8	14	2	20	6	9	65
HAIRY WOODPECKER		1		3		8	2	3	17
NORTHERN FLICKER		2		1		1	1		5
PILEATED WOODPECKER		2	1			3	1	2	9
BLUE JAY		19	19	50	11	66	15	22	202
AMERICAN CROW		270	152	188	350	65	2428	57	3510
FISH CROW		2					1		3
COMMON RAVEN						1			1
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE		23	24	112	45	174	27	83	488
TUFTED TITMOUSE		19	14	40	5	45	14	13	150
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH				2		3			5
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH		3	2	11	2	27	5	4	54
BROWN CREEPER						3			3
CAROLINA WREN						2			2

Southern Rensselaer Christmas Count 2008 — *continued*

SPECIES	SECTOR	A	B	C	E	G	H	J	CIRCLE
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET				3		4			7
EASTERN BLUEBIRD			8	1		51	19	5	84
AMERICAN ROBIN		4	9	103		101	141	14	372
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD		3	1	3		2	4	3	16
EUROPEAN STARLING		485	316	242	820	430	340	184	2817
CEDAR WAXWING					20	20		8	48
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW		15	1	9	5	30	30		90
VESPER SPARROW							1		1
SAVANNAH SPARROW							1		1
SONG SPARROW		2		4			7		13
SWAMP SPARROW							2		2
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW		11	3	2		5	11	5	37
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW							2		2
DARK-EYED JUNCO		13	34	62	33	146	10	79	377
NORTHERN CARDINAL		8	7	17	7	20	10	15	84
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD		15							15
PURPLE FINCH						2			2
HOUSE FINCH		6	8	34		22	1	9	80
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL				1					1
PINE SISKIN				31		26	42	12	111
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH		5	10	43		71	21	18	168
HOUSE SPARROW		42	126	28		68	37	30	331
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS		2314	899	1112	1346	1555	3576	696	11498
TOTAL SPECIES		37	30	31	17	39	49	27	60

Participants

Sector	A	Jory Langner, Will Raup
	B	Joan Cipriani, Peggy Rudis
	C	Phil Whitney, Marjorie Whitney, Hope Batcheller
	E	Gary Goodness, Don Gresens, Paul Brannigan, Bernice Cawron
	G	Will Yandik, Steve Yandik
	H	Bill Lee, Gregg Recer, Jim Ries, Jaime Taft
	J	Debbie Shaw, Bill Ritz

Champlain Valley: Essex County
Sunday, January 25, 2009

The first stop on the Champlain Valley field trip was the Peru apple orchard where a NORTHERN HAWK OWL had been wintering for several weeks. Usually reliable, the owl was found quickly atop a telephone pole south of the orchard. We were able to approach closely and had good scope views and photos of a very obliging owl. Bohemian waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks had recently been seen nearby, but we were able to locate only EASTERN BLUEBIRD, a welcome bit of color on this cold winter's day.

Moving to the Lake Champlain shore at Cumberland Head, where the ferry to Vermont operates through the winter and keeps an area of water open for wintering waterfowl, the usual COMMON MERGANSERS were accompanied by a drake RED-BREASTED MERGANSER. No sign of the several Barrow's Goldeneye present there in past winters. Moving south along the Champlain shore below Plattsburgh with stops at Valcour, Ausable Point State Park, Port Kent, Essex, Whalons Bay and Westport, many more waterfowl of the usual wintering species were seen. All three MERGANSER species, BUFFLEHEAD, COMMON GOLDENEYE, RING-NECKED DUCK, and a HORNED GREBE, in addition to the ubiquitous American BLACK DUCK, and MALLARD, were all that we could find. Open water toward the middle of the lake held rafts of many hundreds, or more probably thousands, of wintering ducks, just beyond scope range.

With birding on the lake shore completed, we moved inland to the "Essex Triangle," hoping to add wintering passerines to the trip list. Here, too, we were to be disappointed as the usual wintering birds were not to be found. A COMMON RAVEN, a flock of WILD TURKEYS, and a pair of BALD EAGLES soaring along a ridge line were about all to be found. A snow squall approaching from the mountains to the west would soon limit visibility, so we headed for the Northway and home, with only 30 species on the trip's list. Thank heavens for the Northern Hawk Owl, which made it all worthwhile.

— *Bill Lee*

Mohawk River: Cohoes to Crescent
Saturday, February 14, 2009

Seventeen participants gathered at the Cohoes "Flats" on a cold but sunny morning. After scoping the "Flats" from River Street we caravanned to stops at Bridge, Dyke, and Tibbetts Avenue where COMMON GOLDENEYE and BUFFLEHEAD allowed a close approach and views in good light. A pair of Peregrine Falcons had taken up residence in a newly placed nest box on the "Collar City" bridge on the Hudson had been observed by the Thursday Birding Group two days before. Unfortunately, neither could be found that day. A BALD EAGLE nest in the nearby Green Island Industrial Park was being added to and decorated by a pair of eagles as observed by one of the participants whose office window overlooked the nest site. Although the nest was empty when we arrived, one of the pair was perched nearby in clear view on a limb of a Cottonwood adjacent to the river. A magnificent adult, the eagle was comfortable enough with our presence to remain until each of us had the opportunity to take as many photos and scope views as desired.

We retraced our route through Cohoes to start up river along the Mohawk toward Crescent. The pool below Cohoes Falls had a good number of waterfowl but almost no gulls. A female LESSER SCAUP stood out among the many COMMON GOLDENEYE, BUFFLEHEAD, COMMON MERGANSER, and HOODED MERGANSER. The view of the falls was spectacular with a substantial volume of water flowing, despite the mostly ice covered river above. At the Crescent Power Plant Pool, an immature BALD EAGLE took flight as we approached and a FISH CROW announced its presence with its nasal call. The number of gulls along this stretch of the river was much reduced from the usual number. There were GREATER BLACK-BACKED GULLS, but no Lesser Black-backed Gulls.

With a very low total of twenty-three species recorded, the trip leader consoled himself with the knowledge that some of the participants had been introduced to unfamiliar wintering waterfowl (life birds for a few) and had spectacular views of BALD EAGLES and Cohoes Falls – both natural wonders.

— *Bill Lee*

Vischer Ferry Nature and Historic Preserve
Sunday, April 5, 2009

There was an excellent turn-out of 20 birders for this evening field trip at Vischer Ferry Preserve. We began by walking along the towpath to the west of the main entrance to check out the ducks in the western ponds. We had excellent looks at GADWALL, AMERICAN WIGEON, BLUE-WINGED TEAL, NORTHERN SHOVELER, GREEN-WINGED TEAL, and RING-NECKED DUCK. WOOD DUCKS were seen but not as well as some of the other ducks. We were also pleased to see a pair of BALD EAGLES soaring high above the towpath. GREAT BLUE HERONS and BELTED KINGFISHER were present as well. On the way to the back of the Preserve we were fortunate to find an AMERICAN COOT in the back pond. Other birds seen include EASTERN BLUEBIRD, TREE SWALLOW, and RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD.

We finished up the evening in the back area of the Preserve near the River. Beginning at dusk we began hearing a male AMERICAN WOODCOCK making the cartoonish "peent" sounds as he warmed up for his evening flight displays. After about 15 minutes he appeared in his usual launching spot providing good looks to all through spotting scopes or binoculars in the moonlight. He then began his series of dramatic flight displays always landing again in the same spot, give or take a foot or two. The highlight of the whole evening probably was watching the WOODCOCK's silhouette with the pencil-like bill passing directly in front of the moon. The WOODCOCK was a life bird for well over half of the group.

— *John Hershey*

Black Creek Marsh Trip Report

Saturday, April 11, 2009

Eight birders joined the leader on a cloudy, cool morning to explore Black Creek Marsh from the School Road entrance. Although it was a bit early for the arrival of some of the birds which are commonly found here and insects were in short supply to bring out those that were here, we had a respectable showing of 28 species.

The highlights included (at the trail entrance) a flock of PINE SISKINS and a WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH uncharacteristically perched on a branch instead of searching for insects in the tree bark. Also (in the main marsh), a very vocal BELTED KINGFISHER and several GREEN-WINGED TEAL. In addition, there was a YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER flying across School Road in front of the group as we headed back to the parking area.

Also observed were WOOD DUCK, AMERICAN BLACK DUCK, MALLARD DUCK, CANADA GOOSE, GREAT BLUE HERON, TURKEY VULTURE, RED-TAILED HAWK, AMERICAN KESTREL, MOURNING DOVE, DOWNY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, EASTERN PHOEBE, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, TREE SWALLOW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, AMERICAN ROBIN, SONG SPARROW, NORTHERN CARDINAL, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, and AMERICAN GOLDFINCH.

— Jennifer Hamilton

Peebles Island State Park

Saturday, May 1, 2009

Peebles Island is a wonderful place to go birding, even if the birds aren't cooperating. The island is so pretty with a variety of habitats nestled between two Mohawk River tributaries. A new vista appears after rounding each bend in the trail. Nineteen birders spent three hours enjoying the setting while hoping to see a life bird. Although there were no warblers sighted or heard, 38 other species were enjoyed. They were:

CANADA GOOSE, WOOD DUCK, MALLARD, TURKEY VULTURE, RED-TAILED HAWK, SPOTTED SANDPIPER, RING-BILLED GULL, HERRING GULL, GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL, ROCK PIGEON, MOURNING DOVE, CHIMNEY SWIFT, BELTED KINGFISHER, RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER, DOWNY WOODPECKER, HAIRY WOODPECKER, NORTHERN FLICKER, PILEATED WOODPECKER, EASTERN KINGBIRD, WARBLING VIREO, BLUE JAY, AMERICAN CROW, TREE SWALLOW, ROUGH-WINGED SWALLOW, BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE, TUFTED TITMOUSE, WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH, AMERICAN ROBIN, GRAY CATBIRD, EUROPEAN STARLING, CHIPPING SPARROW, FIELD SPARROW, SONG SPARROW, NORTHERN CARDINAL, RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD, COMMON GRACKLE, BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD, BALTIMORE ORIOLE, AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

— Gary Goodness

Magee Marsh and Ohio Songbird Migration

Thursday, May 7, 2009 –

Sunday, May 10, 2009

Seven intrepid members of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club recently joined my brother Gerry and I for three days of birding along Ohio's North Coast including two days at the famous migrant hotspot, Magee Marsh Wildlife Area. A total of over 135 species were identified on this out-of-town trip including many neotropical migrants. A full write-up of the trip will be provided for inclusion in a forthcoming issue of *Feathers*. In the meantime, here is an abbreviated list of some of the trip's highlights:

LEAST BITTERN (heard)

LITTLE BLUE HERON

SORA

EASTERN SCREECH OWL

GREAT HORNED OWL

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER

five VIREO species

AMERICAN PIPIT

25 Warbler species including:

YELLOW-THROATED

PROTHONOTARY

CERULEAN (heard)

MOURNING

SUMMER TANAGER

LARK SPARROW

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW

It was a great way to jump start spring birding!

— Tim Colborn, North Olmsted, Ohio

Adirondack Fauna and Flora**Warren Greene**

Monday, June 1, 2009

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

Renowned photographer Warren Greene returns once again to share some of his best shots of the Adirondacks, including birds, butterflies, moths, plants, and scenics. This slide (not digital) presentation provides a true and unenhanced representation of the natural world in all its beauty.

Warren Greene is a native of Gloversville, who has worked for the Fulton County Probation Dept since 1976 and been its Director since 1988. Warren bought his first camera in 1976 in order to document nature the way he had appreciated it his entire life. Although probably most known for his bird photography, Warren enjoys all aspects of nature photography, currently shoots with a Leica R8 camera and a lenses including a 400 f4 lens with a 1.4 converter. Although he modestly describes photography as a personal hobby, Warren has been published extensively in various books, magazines, and other venues over the years.

Birding Northern India**Bernie Grossman**

Monday, September 14, 2009

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

We traveled to Northern India from Late January through mid-February, 2009, to bird an area centered on New Delhi. This included stops at Ranthambhore, Keoladeo Ghana, and Corbett National Parks, as well as the Kumaria/Kosi River and Nainital areas in the Himalayan foothills. We also stopped at Agra to see the Fatephor Secri palace, Agra Fort, and the Taj Mahal.

We saw 320 bird species, leopards, wild elephants, monkeys, and deer species. There were also two really close encounters with wild tigers.

This talk will present descriptions and pictures of the birds and animals seen as well as the culture and monuments of India that we experienced.

Bernard Grossman has been a member of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club for over thirty years and most recently was its president. Previous programs for the Club described trips to Churchill, Manitoba, to view the polar bears and to Alaska for birding. He was a chemist at Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory, Niskayuna, NY, for more than 30 years.

Resource Exploitation, Finch Nesting Events and a Closer Look at Red Crossbill Vocal Types in New York**Matt Young**

Monday, October 5, 2009

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

Matthew A. Young has lived in Central New York for the past 12 years and now resides in Scott, NY (Cortland County). Matt received his B.S. in Water Resources from SUNY-Oneonta and his M. S. in Environmental Forest Biology (concentration in Ornithology) from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in 2003. Matt did his masters research at The Great Swamp Conservancy near Canastota, which is now recognized as an Audubon Important Bird Area, and has helped the Cornell Plantations, Finger Lakes Land Trust, and Central New York Land Trust's acquire unique bird and plant habitat in CNY. He is a Kingbird Regional Editor, (The NYS Ornithological Journal) and he sits on the Board of Directors at Lime Hollow Nature Center and Central New York Land Trust. He recently was an Adjunct Professor in Environmental Studies at SUNY-Cortland before accepting a job in 2008 at the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds as an Audio Production Engineer at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. He wrote the finch (i.e. siskin, grosbeak, crossbills) species accounts for the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas and his research interests involve the study of Red Crossbill vocal types in North America with a focus on the types that occur in the east.

HMBC Open House and New Member Night

An Introduction to Birding and Bird-Feeding

Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

Monday, November 2, 2009

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

Learn why birds are interesting and why “birding” is such a fun and popular hobby – both across America and in our own backyards. In this program we’ll cover some basics of identifying birds and how to attract them to our yards. Feeders, bird seed, plantings, and squirrels will be discussed! Come and learn why we enjoy birds so much!

Information about the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club will be available. New members and the public especially invited. Extra refreshments will be served.

Scott is a past president of the HMBC and Capital Region Audubon, and teaches birding classes for both North and South Colonie School Districts. Denise is a trip leader and past Director of the bird club. Scott and Denise write a monthly nature column for the Chatham Courier and their work have been published in the Times Union’s Life Stories section. They authored a feature story on Christmas Bird Counts in the New York State Conservationist magazine. Together they have birded and traveled across North America but especially enjoy sharing the joy of birding with beginners right here at home. 

The Peregrine Falcon

Known as the fastest bird in the world, the Peregrine Falcon has long held people’s fascination. Majestic, regal and powerful are just some of the descriptions of this interesting hawk. Formerly known as the “Duck Hawk”, these birds prey primarily on song and shore birds. Their primary nest sites used to be natural cliffs, but many have now adapted to urban life, nesting in cities, preying on city birds. Peregrines are approximately crow size, but unlike other hawks, are smaller with pointed wings. Pairs often remain nestmates year after year, and both help raise a brood of three to five young.

It is quite possible to see the pair in Albany, using a man-made nestbox under the Dunn Memorial Bridge. During the spring nesting season and the early summer fledging, they can be easily seen from the Rensselaer side of the bridge at the Rensselaer Riverside Park. As of this writing, four eggs were laid in April, and two eyasses have hatched. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation provides a camera to view the nest online during the nesting season at: www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7429.html

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

The 2009 fledge watch season is fast approaching. The “DMB Fan Club” is small, but loyal. We welcome all levels of birders to help watch the fledging process. Last year, one of the fledglings fell into the Hudson River in her first attempt at flying. Luckily, the kindness of a boater alerted authorities, and she was rescued and recovered fully. Please consider an hour or two of your time to help these magnificent birds!

Contact Elayne Ryba at 518 312-7384 or eryba@nycap.rr.com

Thank you.

— Elayne Ryba 

by **BARBARA ALLEN LOUCKS**,
Special to the Times Union, Albany NY
First published: Sunday, April 26, 2009

We stepped off the roadway and climbed over the side of the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge, down a series of short ladders onto a long, narrow catwalk. I hadn't been to this nest site before, and my colleague Chris had mentioned that there was a bit of climbing involved. There were waist-high railings on the metal catwalk, but it was very open to the water several hundred feet below. An uncoordinated move on my part, a banana peel-type slip, and that would be it. We were wearing neoprene harnesses, but it was impractical to hook them to the bridge as we walked along.

It was a sunny May day, and we were on our way to band young Peregrine Falcons. Still listed as an endangered species in most of the Eastern United States, years of releases of captive-bred birds had brought them back from near extinction in many areas due to DDE residues affecting productivity. Now we had more than 60 pairs in New York, the largest population on the East Coast. We banded as many as possible since they first returned as breeders 24 years ago, to get information on movements and mortality. After walking for a few minutes we could see the Peregrine Falcon nest box far below, on top of one of the tall concrete anchorages, the base supports of the bridge that disappeared into the water. The wooden nest box, several feet square,

had been put there to help increase nesting productivity. Peregrines don't build stick nests as hawks and eagles do, they just dig a hollow depression called a scrape in whatever substrate is available. Without a nest tray and the several inches of rounded gravel it contained, the eggs sometimes rolled off into the water.

As we got closer to the eyrie, we noticed one of the crow-sized adult Peregrines flying around. We came to the final ladder, which was at least 30 feet long, hanging underneath the catwalk and descending straight down to the anchorage. As I grabbed the railing and turned perpendicular to the walkway to back down to start the climb, I tried hard not to look at the water below. The large, gray, adult female was perched at about eye level on a railing only 12 feet away. She was not happy about our visit. The fastest bird in the world vs. probably the world's slowest climber — wearing a hard hat in case she hit me — I was more worried about slipping on the rounded bar-like rungs. Although the ladder was partially enclosed in a circular steel framework, there was nothing to stop my fall to the bottom if I lost my footing. It was still impractical to clip and unclip the harness, so our safety equipment was superfluous — OSHA would be thrilled; no hazardous-duty pay either. I moved slowly, gripping the railing carefully with my leather gloves, focusing straight ahead. Surprised at how nervous I felt, I tried to relax. Climbing around bridges and tall buildings for years was part

of my job as a wildlife biologist, but this situation was a little different.

Where was the female falcon? I didn't think she could get too close to me with the metalwork around the ladder. Chris had gone ahead and I could tell from his voice that he had already reached the bottom. The steel ladder seemed to be moving; was I shaking it? There was no wind. Was it vibration from the roadway far overhead?

Finally reaching the bottom, I noticed that the end of the ladder was not attached to the anchorage! As I stepped across the small gap to the abutment, the rusty round base of the ladder moved away. The bolt originally attaching the ladder had come undone long ago due to the natural movement of the bridge, a fact I was blissfully ignorant of before starting the climb.

Barbara Allen Loucks is a wildlife biologist with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, in Albany. She reported this story to the Albany Times Union, and it is reprinted with the permission of the Times Union and the author. Barbara has been involved in other Peregrine bandings throughout New York, including the Dunn Memorial Bridge falcons here in Albany. Along with the cooperation of the New York State Department of Transportation, she and other biologists ride in a cherry-picker below the bridge to band "Albany's" Peregrines. Thank you, Barbara, and your intrepid fellow bridge scalers (see article in August '08 Feathers, page 54)! 

Sam Madison Award Presented to Hope Batcheller and the NYSYBC



Gordon Batcheller, Mary Batcheller, Hope Batcheller and Scott Stoner for the Sam Madison award

of students and teachers about birds, bird habitats, and bird conservation.”

The best way to characterize Hope’s accomplishments in the Club and her work with the NYS Young Birder’s Club is to present her own words:

“In fall 2006, I started an online Yahoo! group for the young birders of NY State. Since young birders often feel isolated in a world of older birders, my temporary goal was to create an encouraging network. Once the group had been established for a year, I approached the NYSOA board of directors about sponsoring a formal club. They graciously agreed, and have brought the club to where it is now. The [NYS Young Birder’s Club] opened membership last August; its offerings now include monthly field trips, a newsletter, a website, and the online discussion group. We had our first annual meeting in January, where I was elected President of the club. The club ‘provides a community for teen birders to bird together, build

– Continued on Page 42

At the HMBC’s annual meeting on April 22, the Club presented the Sam Madison Award for 2009 to HMBC member Hope Batcheller, with the money going to support the NYS Young Birder’s Club. Hope is a founder of and president of the NYSYBC, under the umbrella of the NYS Ornithological Association or NYSOA.

The Sam Madison Award is given by the Club in the memory of life member Sam Madison. The following is excerpted from the HMBC website:

“The HMBC has established the Sam Madison Award to honor the man who led and advised the Club through much of its history. He served as President, was Nominating Committee chair for as long as anyone can remember, and led field trips to a variety of places. Sam’s Delmarva Peninsula trip was legendary. With a military-like time schedule it was the “Bataan March” of the bird club. Perhaps Sam’s signal accomplishment was his role in acquiring our Reist Sanctuary in 1970. We all have our favorite Sam Story. They all remember an inveterate birder, a caring and sharing friend, and a gentleman in the truest sense. The Sam Madison Award was established to encourage and enhance the education



Bernie Grossman giving farewell address as retiring President of HMBC



Denise Stoner, and Donna and Don Traver

friendships, and grow into tomorrow's birding mentors and environmental stewards'."

Hope has been interested in birds all of her life, and obsessed since age seven. Over the past few years, she has conducted a research project on fledgling vocalizations. She has participated in most of the ABA's youth education programs, including Camp Chiricahua, the Great Texas Birding Classic Tropicbirds team, the Young Birder of the Year Contest. Hope has volunteered for

the NY and VT Breeding Bird Atlases, and currently monitors the Rensselaer Forest Tract Important Bird Area. She plans to "pursue a career as a bird bum."

I think with her enthusiasm, knowledge, leadership skills and devotion to the scientific aspects of bird study, that Hope has an opportunity to make an outstanding contribution to the birding community and/or to the state of the science of bird biology.

As Chair of the Sam Madison Award

Committee, I am proud that the Club can support such a worthy individual as Hope, and such a deserving cause as the New York State Young Birder's Club.

Scott Stoner

Chair

Sam Madison Award Committee

Committee Members

Bill Lee

Cathy Graichen

Fledglings: Life After the Nest

Every May, birders pile out of their houses, headed for the local migration hotspots. Come June, a few run Breeding Bird Survey routes, and others keep an eye on their local nests. By July, though, the chicks fledge, birds grow quiet, and the binoculars go on the shelf. End of story, right? Wrong. Those fledglings must go somewhere and do something, but what exactly they do is largely a mystery

Essentially nothing is known about fledgling behavior, identification, and vocalizations. Why is this, given the abundance of fledglings, and the impact they could have for monitoring breeding birds? Fledglings are young birds that have recently left the nest, but are still dependent on parental

care and feeding. Therefore, the presence of fledglings is an indicator of breeding success, and understanding this key stage of birds' lives could have huge consequences for Breeding Bird Atlases and similar breeding surveys.

Last year, I conducted a project on fledgling vocalizations in collaboration with the VT Institute of Natural Science, Carol Foss of NH Audubon, and Lang Elliott (an excellent nature recordist from Ithaca, NY). My objective was to record fledgling landbirds in New England, thereby starting an archive of their vocalizations. My 2008 summer field season was fantastic. I spent all of July (the peak time for fledglings) in the field, and visited a great diversity of habitats across New England.

Of course, like any field work, there were ups and downs. The 2-inch-long Winter Wren fledglings at Pondicherry National Wildlife Refuge in northern NH... and getting caught in a hail storm later that day. A fledgling Eastern Towhee calling one foot from the path... and the construction noise in the background, making it impossible to get a perfect recording. The recently fledged Common Yellowthroat four feet away... that wasn't vocalizing. By the summer's end, however, I had recorded 35 species of fledglings, and learned much about their behavior to boot.

Fledglings are, arguably, the cutest possible research topic. They are also one of the most challenging. Sometimes they cooperate



Recently-fledged Eastern Phoebes

perfectly, but at other times they are nearly impossible to detect. Young fledglings often sit stationary, fluttering their wings and opening their beak widely when an adult brings food. Many are incapable of flight, leading concerned humans to believe they have prematurely fallen out of their nests. On the contrary, these young birds are safer when dispersed, rather than concentrated in the nest: a big, noisy, smelly target for predators. As fledglings age, they become more active, and their fledgling down is replaced by juvenal plumage. Older fledglings follow their foraging parents, begging constantly, and occasionally attempting to find their own food.

Expert ventriloquists, fledglings of all ages are extremely difficult to locate; a trait which presumably helps them evade predators. Their vocalizations are generally short, repeated notes, but become faster whenever an adult brings food. For some broad examples, warblers' calls are usually a fast twittering, many sparrows have a soft "ticking", and flycatchers make a unique grating call when begging. Most species have distinctive calls, which are identifiable in the field with practice.

As our understanding of fledglings increases, efficiency for Breeding Bird

Atlases and similar projects will be vastly improved. Much information for such projects is currently lost simply because volunteers cannot identify fledglings. Further studies could also provide insight on call development, adult behavior, and species relationships. From a less scientific perspective, fledglings are truly fascinating creatures, and are something anyone can observe. Undescribed behaviors and vocalizations are happening all around us, if only we would pay attention. Better keep those binoculars off the shelf... this summer will be interesting!

Hope Batcheller is 17 years old and lives in Petersburg, NY. To listen to her recordings, and more information on fledglings, please visit www.fledglingguide.org.

— Hope Batcheller



This Red-winged Blackbird shows many characteristics typical of fledglings. Most young songbirds show a brightly-colored gape (fleshy area around beak), though this feature is gradually lost as the bird ages. Note also the downy plumage, short or non-existent tail, and clumsy perching posture.

March 3, 2009 at the Grand Canyon. In the morning after the fossil talk I saw a WESTERN SCRUB JAY on the rim of the Grand Canyon. It was rather slender, solitary, and posed nicely at the end of a pine branch. In the afternoon we went to a great talk about the CALIFORNIA CONDOR. If one wants to keep up on the activity of the birds and their keepers go to perigrinfund.com.

March 5, 2009. I am now at the B&B, Casa Tierra, on the western side of Tucson, only a short walk from the Western Saguaro National Park. I went out in the early AM and easily found the GILA WOODPECKER sitting on top of the Saguaro Cactus very nonchalantly looking around. A Lifer. Then looking at a flicker I realized that it was the GILDED FLICKER. Lifer.

March 6, 2009. Still in Tucson. Our group of six did a 5-mile hike and saw a juvenile FERRUGINOUS HAWK sitting at the top of a Saguaro Cactus with a very plain white belly. Lifer. At first I thought it was an Aplomondo Hawk but a closer and longer look said no.

March 7, 2009. PYRRHOLOXIA, lifer, on the wires and making lots of noises, very much like a Cardinal. Watched the CURVE-BILLED THRASHER foraging on the ground for food. Lifer. I would assume it was looking for grubs and insects. The CURVE-BILLED THRASHER also flicks its tail a lot while calling in a bush. Calling even with a large seed in its beak.

During the day we did a nice hike in the Saguaro National Park. Today was sunny, breezy and 70 with no clouds. I saw two more lifers on the 3 mile walk. I bookended the walk with a GRAY VIREO at the start and a BLACK-THROATED SPARROW at the end. I do like birding in the desert because the growth is low and there are a lot less leaves to hide the birds. But, the birds are appropriately colored to make them difficult to find in this green, gray, sandy brown environment.

March 8, 2009. Sunday and the last morning at Casa Tierra. I was out by 7 in the bright

sun and didn't go more than a few hundred feet from the B&B. Delighted to watch both the CACTUS WREN and the CURVED-BILLED THRASHER on the ground using their identical bills for insect foraging. I watched a BLACK-THROATED SPARROW going for seeds around all the low ground plants and watched a GILA WOODPECKER tap on the exhaust fan of the B&B in order to make a resounding racket.

In and around the B&B there were lots of great looks at the GAMBLE'S QUAIL. Lifer. They were easy to hear with a clear 2 note call and easy to spot. They would get out at the end of a branch that was low to the ground and call. They were not particularly shy some of the time and let me approach within 40 feet as if they were showing off to me.

March 9, 2009. As we were waiting for the gates to open at the Colossal Cave I got out of the car and started birding. The first lifer was the PHAINOPEPLA and I called Jo immediately to see it because I didn't think I would ever see one. When they fly they have white patches on their wings like a Mockingbird. We watched one chase around in the air as if it were a flycatcher. Then I immediately saw two RUFUS-WINGED SPARROWS sitting together on a branch taking in the warmth of the early morning sun. Lifer. At the parking lot I kept hearing what I thought was a distant hawk screeching. A fellow birder came by and said that the bird I was hearing was the SAY'S PHOEBE. Lifer.

On our next canyon walk it took me a while to figure out what that 9 inch sparrow was. It was the largest sparrow I had ever seen and I did not think that there were any that size in my books. Then I found the towhee page and the riddle was solved. I was in a canyon and it was a CANYON TOWHEE. Lifer. We had great looks at a Ladderback Woodpecker. It was busy but not as frenetic as our two little ones back east. Lifer. In the willows, on the return walk we saw a HUTTON'S VIREO. Lifer, but Johanna was not impressed.

As we walked the streets of Patagonia I noticed a small dove with a beautiful scalloped pattern on its back. Another lifer for it was the long sought after INCA DOVE.

March 10, 2009. Before breakfast at the Duquesne House B&B I went for a short walk and saw some BLACK-THROATED SPARROWS and a CANYON TOWHEE watching me. There were several BEWICK'S WRENS that were very showy and came very close when I pushed. Lifer.

Along the way to Patagonia Lake State Park we stopped at a wayside picnic table and saw another lifer, the BLACK-TAILED GNATCATCHER. We could distinguish it from the California by the 4 large white spots on the underside of the tail.

At Patagonia Lake State Park later in the day I saw 4 EARED GREBES with one male in full strut so he was particularly striking with his head feathers in a golden hue fanning away from his beak. Lifer. Also saw a pair of ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLERS that were lifers.

There was a BROAD-BILLED HUMMINGBIRD sitting on a tree branch posing for us. Lifer. The long, red bill was an item of awe for it radiated redness in the bright sun. I also got a wonderful view of a VERDIN, and could easily see the small, red shoulder patches that keep the VERDIN from being some rare form of warbler.

On our last day we chose to return to Patagonia State Park and go on the bird walk from 8 to 11 in search of the Elegant Trogon and other birds.

The lifers I saw were CINNAMON TEAL, a beautiful duck with the cinnamon shimmering in the sun as it bobbed for food with a bill almost as large as a Northern Shoveler. I got very excited to see the VERMILLION FLYCATCHER as it perched in the sun at tree top level and went out and back chasing after insects. ASH THROATED FLYCATCHER, NEOTROPIC CORMORANT, BLACK THROATED GRAY WARBLER, NORTHERN BEARDLESS TYRANULET were our other lifers. So for rather casual birding I saw 39 new lifers! 

Terry Sprague, from Prince Edward County, Ontario, is the host of the NatureStuff website. Reprinted with the author's permission from The Tweed News, Tweed ON Canada, Wednesday, May 06, 2009

The purple martin - "nest built of grasses, twigs, bark, paper, leaves and string."

Funny... Peterson's Field Guide to Birds' Nests says nothing about the assortment of tea bags that our purple martins gather from the compost pile and use in the construction of their nests on our property.

And the book, excellent in every other way in describing the nests of birds to people who may find them, doesn't mention the pair of barn swallows near Belleville that once used the abandoned nest of a robin under an awning to raise its young.

What about these oddities of the bird world and where can we find a guide to describe what goes on in their little bird brains that would dictate such behavior? The pair of barn swallows described above, made no repairs or alterations to the robin's nest - not a beakful of mud was brought to the nest for reinforcing. They simply moved right in, the eggs were therein deposited, and a successful brood raised. End of story.

A robin on our property once built in an eavestrough which channeled rain from a very long and large barn roof. With each heavy rainstorm a torrent of water would

dam up behind the nest, inching it ever closer to the drain pipe. A successful brood floated to maturity. Another robin in Prince Edward County was disappointed in the choice of trees offered and chose to construct its nest right on the ground beneath one of the rejected trees. A killdeer near Oshawa some years ago deposited its eggs in the discarded nest of a grackle which had been removed from a tree and tossed into a farm field. And perhaps the most bizarre sighting of all many years ago near Whitby - a female cowbird that does not build a nest but lays its eggs in the nests of other songbirds, was actually seen carrying nesting material. Some long lost instinct of centuries ago?

Even more amazing in the bird world have been the items to which many bird species have been attracted. What we may consider as trash, some birds interpret as viable construction material. Do birds actually know that nails are used in the construction of our own homes? One would think so after one purple martin nest in eastern Ontario was found to contain over a hundred steel nails, each two and half inches in length.

Purple martins are notorious for using weird items. One nest in Kentucky contained no fewer than 98 pull tabs. Popsickle sticks, tinfoil, match covers, gum wrappers and dryer lint are other items that have been used by purple martins.

Fall cleaning of our martin house over the years has revealed a strange collection of add-ons in addition to the regular Red Rose tea bags, including cigarette butts (we don't smoke), discarded theatre tickets, twist ties and an entire garden seed packet.

Why do birds use foreign material in the construction of their nests? One explanation might be that these items are used as decorations. House sparrows often use sprigs of green vegetation or a flower petal in their nest, although the addition of living material for these birds might serve as some sort of pesticide.

What motivates these birds to use these materials and how are they interpreting them? The Peterson Field Guide To Birds tells of one song sparrow that built its nest entirely of short pieces of wire, and of a wood thrush that built its nest of paper napkins and facial tissues. Why would a canyon wren in California construct its nest entirely of office supplies? This particular nest was held together by an assemblage of paper clips, rubber bands and thumb tacks! Where did it obtain these strange items, and what was the attraction?

A nest of nails? Careful now... lower yourself gently onto those eggs.

— Terry Sprague 

Please visit Terry Sprague's NatureStuff website at <http://naturestuff.net>

JUNE**ALBANY PINE BUSH PRESERVE**

Date to be announced, June or July

We are trying to coordinate an evening trip through the Pine Bush Discovery Center to look for Whippoorwills in the Albany Pine Bush Preserve. We will post any information on the club website (www.hmbc.net) and, if time allows, here in *Feathers*, so check these places for details later.

ROUND LAKE AND THE ANTHONY KILL PADDLING TRIP

Saturday June 6 (morning)

Coordinators: Scott Stoner &
Denise Hackert-Stoner
785-6760
scottjstoner@aol.com

We will paddle about 4 miles (2 miles across a deep lake & 2 miles in a stream) looking for cormorants, breeding songbirds and woodpeckers. The main goal will be to observe the activity at a Great Blue Heron rookery. The trip is limited to 6 boats and is restricted to HMBC members and their guests. Participants must bring their own canoe or kayak, paddles and life jackets (PFD) and must wear their PFD at all times. Reservations must be made in advance no later than Thurs. June 4. Contact the coordinators for starting place & time & further information.

SARATOGA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK & BATTLEFIELD

Sunday June 7 (morning)

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

We will initially walk along the tour road looking for resident warblers, vireos, sparrows and other birds. We will then walk across the fields to join the road and finally return via the Wilkerson Trail.

This will give us a good exposure to woods and fields with a wide variety of species. The walk will take about four hours. Wear waterproof hiking boots, hats and sunscreen and bring bug repellent.

Meet at 8:00 am at the Battlefield's main parking lot.

CHERRY PLAINS STATE PARK

Saturday June 13 (morning)

Coordinators: Phil & Marge Whitney
477-90505
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, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Black and White, Yellow-rumped and Canada Warblers. Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Veery, Hermit Thrush and Winter Wren also nest here. An early start is important for midsummer birding, so plan to meet at 7:00 am at the parking lot at the Hannaford market on the right side of Rt 43 just past the intersection of Rt 150 in West Sand Lake.

PAPSCANEE ISLAND PRESERVE

Saturday June 20 (morning)

Coordinators: Don & Nancy 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. Chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and woodpeckers are found in the forest as well as Eastern Wood-Pee-wee, 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 am in the Kmart on Rts. 9 & 20 in East Greenbush since parking at the preserve is limited.

EMMA TREADWELL THATCHER NATURE CENTER

Saturday June 27 (morning)

Coordinator: Ellen Pemrick
452-4284
lmnp@nycap.rr.com

The Emma Treadwell Thatcher 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. We will walk the trails in search of warblers, thrushes, and sparrows. Northern Harrier, Black-billed Cuckoo and Bobolink may also be seen. Meet at 8:00 am in the center parking area. Directions: From Albany, take Exit 4 (Rt 85) off I-90 and continue west for approx. 12 miles to Rt 157. Bear right onto 157 and continue through Thatcher State Park. After leaving the park, turn right on Ketcham Rd. (Rt 256). Drive 1 mile to Nature Center Way on the left. The center is located at 87 Nature Center Way in Voorheesville.

JULY**Reservations for September Cape May Trip**

required by Wednesday July 1

H.G. REIST SANCTUARY

Saturday July 11 (morning)

Coordinators: Don & Nancy Gresens
370-3923
dgresens@nycap.rr.com

Join us at the club's sanctuary to look and listen for summer and year-round resident species and to try to add new species to the sanctuary's bird list. The sanctuary is a woodland habitat, so flowers 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 am at the sanctuary.

AUGUST

Reservations for Noblewood Park
required by Saturday August 15

NOBLEWOOD PARK

Saturday August 22 (all day)
Coordinator: Matt Medler
mdm2atcornell.edu

This park along the shore of Lake Champlain offers both beautiful scenery and excellent birding. During late August, Noblewood's vast sandbars typically host hundreds of Bonaparte's Gulls, scores of Common Terns, and up to 30 Caspian Terns. With so many gulls present, there is always a chance of picking out a Little Gull, Black-headed Gull, or something even rarer. Shorebirds are hit-or-miss at Noblewood, but when they are present, they can often be enjoyed at close range. Contact the coordinator by Sat. Aug. 15 for details and carpooling information.

JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

Sunday August 23 (all day)
Coordinator: Jory Langner
439-0604 langnerj@earthlink.net

Jamaica Bay Wildlife refuge in New York City is widely recognized as one of the top birding spots in North America. Migrating shorebirds will be the main attraction this time of year. A variety of herons and egrets can be expected along with the possibility of Clapper Rail, Black Skimmer and Boat-tailed Grackle, to name just a few. This will be a day trip. Contact the coordinator by Thurs. Aug 20 for details and to arrange for carpooling.

SEPTEMBER

CAPE MAY, NEW JERSEY

Friday September 11 –
Sunday September 13 (overnight)
Coordinators Gerry Colborn
& Leaders: (primary)
237-3898
gcolborn@nycap.rr.com
Tim Colborn
(440) 979-9972
gtcolborn@wowway.com
James Colborn

LIMIT 10 PARTICIPANTS

Cape May, NJ is famous among birders worldwide for the avian spectacle that occurs there every fall. Countless birds stop by or pass through there on their way to their southern wintering grounds. Join us as we look for raptors at the Cape May point, songbirds at Higbee Beach and shorebirds at Stone Harbor. We'll make stops at Malibu Beach to see the 100+ Black Skimmer colony and Nummy's Island to see the roosting Night-Herons. These are just a few of the sites we'll be visiting. We'll also be keeping our eyes out for migrant and resident butterflies and dragonflies as well as any other critters we can find. Participants will be responsible for their own transportation and accommodations. The leaders will be happy to assist in providing information about where to stay in Cape May.

HAWK WATCHING AND SONGBIRDS IN THE HELDERBERG ESCARPMENT

#1: PINNACLE

Saturday September 19
Coordinator: Gary Goodness
862-9260
goodness@nycap.rr.com

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

HAWK WATCHING AND SONGBIRDS IN THE HELDERBERG ESCARPMENT

#2: HIGH POINT

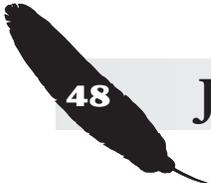
Saturday September 26
Coordinator: Gary Goodness
862-9260
goodness@nycap.rr.com

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, where we will watch for Broad-winged and other migrating hawks. Meet in front of the bank at the southwest corner of Rts. 20 & 155 in Guilderland at 8:00 am.

VISCHERS FERRY NATURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVE

Sunday September 27 (morning)
Coordinator: John Hershey
371-3114
hersheyj@nycap.rr.com

Fall migrants will be the main attraction for this field trip. Species that breed further north or in higher elevations stop here on their way south, sometimes providing better opportunities to observe them than when they are in their breeding territory. We will search for waterfowl, raptors, thrushes, Winter Wren, vireos, kinglets, White-throated and Lincoln's Sparrows, Scarlet Tanagers and a variety of warblers. Meet at the preserve entrance at 8:30 am.



Join HMBC/Renew Your Membership

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?

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

(please circle one category)

Membership Category

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

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

Please make check payable to:
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and mail with this form to:
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Dan Welch, Membership Chair
c/o TSV
700 Columbia Turnpike
East Greenbush, NY 12061

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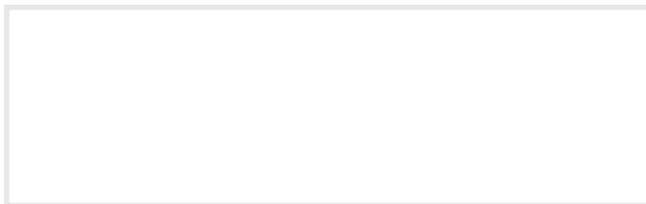
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