

December, 2023
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Feathers

*Bi-monthly publication of the
Hudson-Mohawk
Bird Club, Inc.*

A “New Gansevoort” by Scott Stoner Featuring the Photography of Warren Greene

Years ago, Denise and I learned that the town of Gansevoort meant “Goose Crossing” in Dutch. We knew this because long-time HMBC member Barb Putnam included this on her email signature. Thus, it seems almost fitting that a local park in Colonie, The Crossings, has become somewhat of a goose crossing!

In late October and continuing well into November, The Crossings has hosted two less-common geese within the usual several hundred Canadas. These are a blue morph Snow Goose, and a Cackling Goose, a significantly smaller species compared to the otherwise reasonably similar Canada.

Renowned upstate New York wildlife photographer Warren Greene generously sent me a number of photos of both of these geese with an offer to share. With great appreciation, see below.



Blue Morph Snow Goose

(To see the rest of Warren’s photos go to page 123)

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There is no President's Corner this month.

You, too, can contribute to Feathers!

- Do you have a birding story or photos that might be of interest to other birders?
- Have you led a field trip for HMBC?
- Have you written short prose or poetry on the subject of birds? We're starting a Writers' Page!
- Did you take a birding vacation?
- Do you have a favorite birding spot?

SHARE them with HMBC members by submitting them to:

HMBC Contact Information

BIRDLINE of EASTERN NEW YORK:

E-mail: contact@hmbc.net

HMBC website: <http://hmbc.net>

Please send all **electronic submissions for Feathers** via e-mail to:
Denise Hackert-Stoner at denisehstoner@aol.com.

Send all paper submissions to:

Denise Hackert-Stoner

6 Knob Hill Road.

Loudonville,

NY

12211

“New Gansevoort” *(continued)*



Blue Morph Snow Goose, Warren Greene



Cackling Goose, Warren Greene

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

2023 HMBC-Sponsored Christmas Counts:

Saturday, December 16, SCHENECTADY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Larry Alden 518-495-6535 overlook@nycap.rr.com

Saturday, December 23, SOUTHERN RENSSELAER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Naomi Lloyd 518-596-5964 naomi_kestrel@yahoo.com

Saturday, December 30, TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Larry Alden 518-495-6535 overlook@nycap.rr.com

Monday, January 1, NEW YEAR'S DAY BIRD COUNT AT FIVE RIVERS EEC (Albany County; morning)

Coordinators: Five Rivers EEC 518-475-0291 (daytime) ~and~ Cindy Edwardson cjredwardson@gmail.com 218-348-1859

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, located on Game Farm Rd., in Delmar, NY, is a large area of fields and forest and is one of the premier birding locations in the Capital District.

This year marks the 41st Annual New Year's Day Bird Count at Five Rivers. The goal of the count is to identify all the bird species present on January 1st. This also marks the start of Five Rivers' annual bird list. HMBC joins the event again this year and encourages members to participate. Groups will go out at 9:00 a.m., but birders are welcome to come earlier to get a head start. Everyone will meet up at the Visitors Center for a compilation of species observed at 11:00 a.m.

Call ahead to Five Rivers in case of inclement weather.

Meet at 8:45 a.m. at Five Rivers EEC in Delmar.

Mid-January: WASHINGTON COUNTY GRASSLANDS WMA (Washington County; afternoon)

Coordinator: Naomi Lloyd 518-596-5964 naomi_kestrel@yahoo.com

With almost 500 acres of protected fields and meadows, the Washington County Grasslands WMA is a winter treasure. We will meet in the early afternoon and search for Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, Rough-legged Hawks and other diurnal species. Snowy Owl is always a possibility in an irruption year. As the afternoon wears on, we can hope to see the changeover from day to night shift, as Short-eared Owls displace Northern Harriers from their hunting grounds.

The exact date of this trip will depend upon weather conditions, snow depth, etc.

Because we will be birding from the road, it will be necessary to share vehicles and to limit the number of participants to 16. A maximum of five vehicles would be best. Contact the coordinator for reservations, and other information.

Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the parking lot on Blackhouse Road.

Sunday, January 21, DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS, CAPE ANN & NEWBURYPORT/PLUM ISLAND (out-of-area weekend)

Coordinators Gregg Recer/Cathy Graichen, gregg.recer@gmail.com 518-330-4552 (GR)

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS (CONTINUED)

Mid-February: WASHINGTON COUNTY GRASSLANDS WMA (Washington County; afternoon)

Coordinator: TBA

If there is interest, we will repeat January's trip in February.

With almost 500 acres of protected fields and meadows, the Washington County Grasslands WMA is a winter treasure. We will meet in the early afternoon and search for Snow Buntings, Horned Larks, Rough-legged Hawks and other diurnal species. Snowy Owl is always a possibility in an irruption year. As the afternoon wears on, we can hope to see the changeover from day to night shift, as Short-eared Owls displace Northern Harriers from their hunting grounds.

The exact date of this trip will depend upon weather conditions, snow depth, etc.

Because we will be birding from the road, it will be necessary to share vehicles and to limit the number of participants to 16. A maximum of five vehicles would be best. Contact the coordinator for reservations, and other information.

Meet at 2:00 p.m. at the parking lot on Blackhouse Road.

Saturday February 17 – Monday February 19, CAPE ANN & NEWBURYPORT/PLUM ISLAND MA (out-of-area, multi-day trip)

Coordinators: Gregg Recer and Cathy Graichen gregg.recer@gmail.com 518-330-4554 (GR)

The Cape Ann and Newburyport/Plum Island, MA, areas are prime winter birding locations. We expect to divide our time between Cape Ann's shoreline and Newburyport/Plum Island looking for white-winged gulls, wintering sea ducks such as Harlequins, scoters, eiders and other winter visitors like Purple Sandpipers, loons, grebes, alcids, field birds, Snowy Owls, etc. Participants will have Friday to travel at their leisure so that we can begin birding as a group first thing Saturday morning. Limit 8 participants. By Club policy, this overnight trip is for members, with non-members accommodated if room is available and with the leader's approval.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. Contact Gregg Recer by January 21st to reserve a spot and for hotel reservation information.

Sunday, March 3, DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS, BRADDOCK BAY/LAKE ONTARIO (out-of-area weekend) Coordinators:

Gregg Recer/Cathy Graichen, gregg.recer@gmail.com 518-330-4552

Saturday, March 23, VOSBURGH SWAMP WMA (Greene County; morning) (Joint trip with Alan Devoe Bird Club)

Coordinator: Alan Mapes 518-817-1512

On this morning trip, we will hike to the marsh for waterfowl and migrant land birds. We will also check the Hudson River for waterfowl and Bald Eagles.

Meet at 8:00AM at the Four-mile Point Preserve parking lot on Four Mile Road. From Mansion Street in the village of Coxsackie, go south on State Route 385 (Washington Ave.), approximately 2.5 miles to a left turn onto Four Mile Point Road. Proceed to the bottom of the hill – the parking area is straight ahead where the road takes a 90 degree bend to the right.

WRITERS PAGE

The Crow

By: Marilyn Hamecher 11/27/23

In no way, is the Crow an ordinary bird just flitting around during any season.

Scientists have learned the Crow is the most intelligent bird and for many reasons.

Crow brains display insight, tool use, deceit, languages, social learning and play.

Add risk takers, revenge, murder and showing self-recognition, what more can I say.

The Crow species is much smarter than we thought, having advanced brain power.

Now, scientists have moved them up, close to the Primates, in their own Ivory tower.

Research has found they can use a mental template to make simple tools from scratch.

They remember dimensions of tools that they need and can create a perfect match.

This suggests that they may come from a tool making human being culture.

Other cultures in the world have recognized the Crow, but not the Vulture.

Their unique cognitive abilities are recognized and quite often they reciprocate

Some cultures have domesticated them because of their ability to communicate.

A Vietnamese man used the Crow to guard his master's house, while he was gone.

The Crow revealed his wife's infidelities, when a guy showed up, who did not belong.

A Crow conveying infidelity may sound a tad far-fetched and out of whack.

When his Master returned, he killed his wife and buried her in his tool shack.

The next time you see a gathering of Crows, you'll have a much better take.

Cast a look of wonder upon them; watch closely, they are no mistake.

ON NATURE

Chasing the Shadow: Confessions of an Umbraphile, by Scott Stoner

They call us umbraphiles. Shadow lovers. Shadows of the moon, to be specific. Which translates to our being shadow chasers. Chasers of the umbra, the shadow cast by our lone moon during a solar eclipse.

As we seek out the beauty of nature, we are aware that sometimes it is above us. Sometimes it is right there, and other times it requires a substantial effort to see.

Total Solar Eclipse August 21, 2017

Six years ago, we journeyed out to Nebraska to see the Great American Eclipse, a total eclipse on August 21, 2017. We studied the path of the eclipse, identified areas with the highest likelihood of clear skies, consulted with a meteorologist friend, and, avoiding the seemingly most crowded location, selected western Nebraska. We studied techniques for eclipse photography, purchased solar filters, and wrote out and rehearsed in-field procedures. We had our lodging, plane, and car reservations, and some viewing locations in mind, and planned an early arrival to scout out potential sites. We experienced the realities of "event pricing," huge lines at the car rental counter at Denver Airport, eclipse mania in town, and huge crowds at national park service areas staked out for potential viewing.

By the night of the day before the eclipse, we had a first choice and several backups in case of clouds on the big day. Awakening around 2:30 AM on eclipse day, and doing one last check of the weather, we made a last-minute decision to drive a hundred miles west, into Wyoming, for clear skies. Our goal was to reach Fort Laramie, Wyoming, a National Park Service site that would open their gate at a specific time early that morning, and let in only a limited number of cars.

It was a nerve-racking drive in the darkness, exacerbated by my navigational error (in full disclosure, I was checking my social media instead of tending my directional duties!), but we finally made it to Fort Laramie, got in an endless line, and anxiously awaited the opening of the gate. Whew, we made it in! We lugged our stuff to the big grassy field, staked out a spot, and set up and waited in eager anticipation along with many hundreds of other eclipse aficionados. It was an exciting shared opportunity to witness something only experienced a few times in a lifetime. Many had cameras, some even telescopes set up, but everyone had a shared excitement about being witness to celestial history.



ON NATURE (CONTINUED)

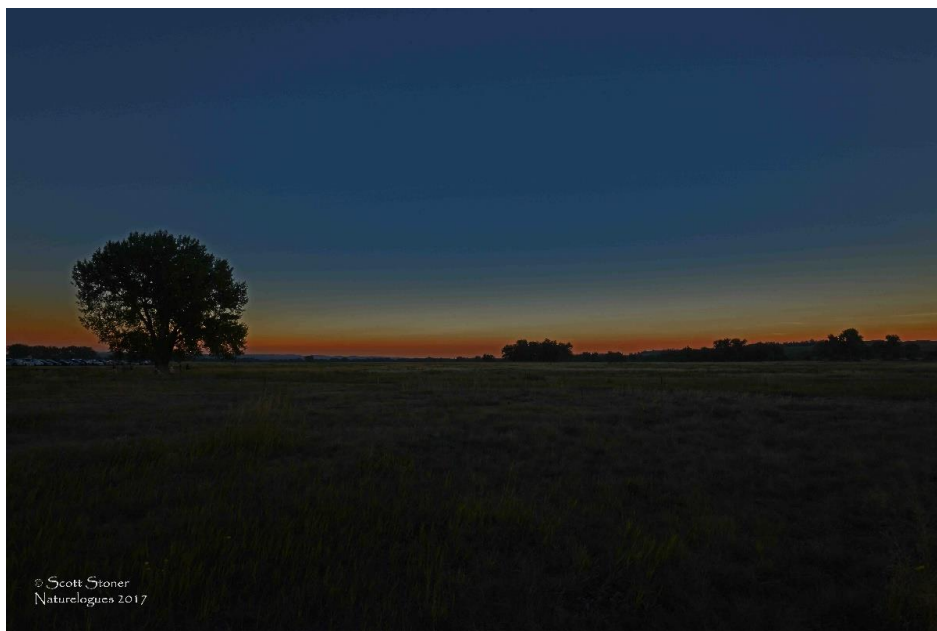
Soon it began...a black disk of moon taking a bite out of the sun.



ON NATURE *(CONTINUED)*

Over the next hour and 15 minutes, the moon moved inexorably across our closest star, as the light outdoors faded and the crowd's excitement grew. And suddenly, it happened. TOTALITY! The moment we were waiting for, had traveled 2,000 miles for, had planned several years for, and gotten up at 2:30 for, was at hand! We had barely two-and-one-half minutes to shoot as many photos as possible, and - importantly - to LOOK AT it – and at the darkened scene around us. It was simply incredible, an utterly unworldly, awe inspiring, gorgeous thing up in the sky...Experiencing totality was worth it all!

First, the “diamond ring” at the beginning of totality, followed by a view of the sun’s corona during totality.



ON NATURE (CONTINUED)

Then, as abruptly as it began, totality was over. The crowd, after seemingly holding its collective breath, let out a whoop of exultation. The moon continued its passage across the face of the sun until the sun was once again full. And we, and thousands of fellow observers, got back in long lines to drive back to our night's destinations.

We read that a typical reaction to seeing an eclipse is to immediately begin planning to see another. And that is what brought us to New Mexico in mid-October 2023!

Annular Eclipse, October 14, 2023

Much of the preparation and planning was similar to 2017...eclipse path research, meteorological assessment, early reservations, buying another solar filter (for a new lens), and site considerations. But there was one huge difference: the eclipse itself. Not a total, but an annular eclipse! A so-called "ring of fire" in which the moon is so far from earth that it only blocks the center of the sun, leaving a ring of sunlight showing around the moon.

Similar to 2017, we also made a cloud-forecast-based early morning destination change, driving northwest of Albuquerque. And once again, we were rewarded by clear skies and a great view of this wondrous event!



The next total solar eclipse in the world will be on April 8, 2024...cutting a swath of darkness across the USA from Texas to New York...And yes, we'll be out there! Eclipse glasses, solar filters, tripods and all. Chasing the shadow once again!

For more information on eclipses, please see <https://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/list.html>, <https://www.timeanddate.com/eclipse/umbra-shadow.html>, and <https://science.nasa.gov/eclipses/types/>

THOUGHTS ON WINTER BREEDING BIRD ATLAS ACTIVITY

ALISON VAN KEUREN REGIONAL COORDINATOR CAPITAL REGION NY

BREEDING BIRD ATLAS III

To all the folks who have contributed to the NY Breeding Bird Atlas – THANK YOU!

As we head into the final field season of NYSBBBIII, I encourage atlasers to go beyond their local birding sites and visit incomplete priority blocks. While owl observations are longer required to complete a priority block, they are desired. Many of the Atlas priority blocks do not have owl reports.

If you find owls while participating in Christmas Bird Counts, please submit them through the Atlas portal even if they occur in non-priority blocks.

As a reminder, Great Horned Owls start nesting in late January, and are engaged in courtship activities for several weeks before that; Eastern Screech-Owls and Barred Owls typically begin to nest in mid-to-late March; Northern Saw-whet Owls breed somewhat later, beginning in early April.

The following is a county-by-county list of incomplete priority blocks in which no owls have been reported.

Albany County: Durham NW; Greenville NW

Fulton County: Broadalbin CE; Broadalbin NW; Canada Lake NW [zero visits]; Caroga Lake NW [zero visits]; Gloversville CE; Gloversville NW; Jackson Summit NW; Lassellsville NW; Northville NW; Oppenheim NW

Greene County: Ashland CE; Ashland NW; Cementon CE; Cementon NW; Freehold NW; Hensonville NW; Hunter NW; Lexington NW; Prattsville CE; West Kill NW

Montgomery County: Amsterdam NW; Canajoharie CE; Canajoharie NW; Esperance NW; Fort Plain NWA; Randall NW; Sharon Springs CE; Tribes Hill NW

Rensselaer County: Berlin CE; Hanock NW

Saratoga County: Conklingville NW; Corinth NW; Niskayuna NW; Ohmer Mountain CE; Ohmer Mountain NW [zero visits]; Porters Corner CE; Porters Corners NW; Quaker Springs CE

Schenectady County: Pattersonville CE

Schoharie County: Breakabeen CE; Charlotteville CE; Cobleskill CE; Gilboa CE; Gilboa NW; Livingstonville CE; Livingstonville NW; Richmondville CE; Richmondville NW; Schoharie CE; Stamford CE; Summit NW

Warren County: Bakers Mills CE; Bullhead Mountain CE; Chestertown CE; Chestertown NW; Griffin CE; Harrisburg CE; Harrisburg NW; Lake George CE; Lake Luzerne CE; North Creek CE; Stony Creek CE; Stony Creek NW; The Glen NW; Warrensburg CE; Warrensburg NW

Washington County: Cambridge CE; Cambridge NW; Cossayuna CE; Fort Ann CE; Granville CE; Granville NW; Putnam CE; Putnam Mountain CE; Salem CE; Salem NW; Schaghticoke NW; Schuylerville CE; West Pawlet CE; Whitehall NW

Field Trip Reports

Saratoga Spa State Park, September 30, 2023, Naomi Lloyd

On Saturday September 30, members of the Hudson Mohawk Bird Club participated in a field trip to the park. Led by Naomi Lloyd and Park Ranger Linda, the group traversed the woods and fields to observe a host of birds including late fall migrants, foliage, and flowers. Despite the drizzle, a total of 40 species were observed. The most dramatic sighting was a Peregrine Falcon, cruising below Stop 1. The six pack of woodpeckers were all seen (Pileated, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, Northern Flicker, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker). The demise of the Ash trees from the Emerald Ash Borer provided great habitat for these species. The tinkling of the many Bluebirds, the "potato -chip" like sounds of the Goldfinches, the Raven's gronk like vocals, and the Carolina Wren's "Tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle calls were delightful music to the group. A few warblers lingered - Magnolia, Black-throated Green, and Yellow - while the advancing forces of sparrows included White-throats and Lincoln's. The National Cemetery played songs and rang bells for much of the time, providing some unusual competition with the birds and our ears.

Thank you to all the participants for their wonderful birding skills and making this a successful and enjoyable outing.
eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S151110161>

Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail, Saturday, October 28, 2023, Naomi Lloyd

Sometimes perfect weather can be a drawback! On a day more like early September than almost Hallowe'en, the Mohawk-Hudson Bike-Hike Trail was extremely busy, with a constant stream of walkers, runners, and "On your left!" So, the skulky sparrows were less evident than they'd been a few days earlier, when the path saw much less use. Nevertheless, we had nice looks at two Fox Sparrows high up in trees and a good number of White-throats, some of them singing. The resident Mockingbird sang in the parking lot and a Brown Creeper there was a nice start. We had several good views of Belted Kingfishers along the way as well as numerous Green-winged Teal and Wood Ducks. For raptors we had an adult Bald Eagle and a flash of a flyby Cooper's Hawk by the farm fields. We ended up with 37 species seen (and a few sp?), not a bad total for this transitional season.

eBird checklist:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S153339073>

Collins Lake, November 4, 2023, Dan Leonard

About sixteen (16) folks met at Jumpin' Jacks to bird Collins Park and the nearby bikepath in Scotia. The morning started quickly with an accipiter flyover at the meeting point. We then moved to the Collins Lake beach-area, where a female Ruddy Duck gave us plenty of viewing opportunities, along with an American Coot and an adult Bald Eagle. Around this time the many Canada Geese that have been overwintering on the lake in recent days took off for their daytime foraging grounds. The Snow Goose that had been recently trying and failing to blend in with this flock was NOT present on the day of our trip. We did get very nice views of Wood Duck and Common Merganser, and Mallards –of course – but the lake was, unfortunately for us, otherwise a bit light on waterfowl.

Some requisite Little Brown Jobs (LBJs) WERE present, particularly in the brushed back thickets along the bike path by the new-ish solar field. But, as seems to be their default fall migration strategy, our birds on the day were supremely shy and uncannily able to disappear under the view of optics! There were certainly White-throated and Song Sparrows and Dark-Eyed Junco, but the more elusive target LBJs (there were HOPES of Fox Sparrow being on the scene)...eluded us!

Field Trip Reports *(continued)*

We caught good views of one late-ish warbler – a Yellow-rumped Warbler. Most of the other “usual” suspects appeared throughout our walk – 36 species by my count. Here’s a link to that list:

<https://ebird.org/checklist/S153719883>

Vischer Ferry Preserve, John Hershey, November 12, 2023

We had 13 participants this morning for the HMBC field trip at Vischer Ferry Preserve. The highlight of the trip was probably just the beautiful dabbling ducks, namely Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Wood Duck, Mallard, and American Black Duck. While scouting yesterday the leader did see a Northern Shoveler but we were unable to find it this morning. We had all the usual woodpecker species except sapsucker. Many of the birds were heard by some with good ears but not necessarily seen by all. These include Golden-crowned Kinglet, Pine Siskin, Dark-eyed Junco, and Rusty Blackbird. A few others worth mentioning include Belted Kingfisher, Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Mockingbird, Carolina Wren, Eastern Bluebird, American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and House Finch.

In the final tally, we counted 39 species collectively. Thanks to all who participated.



White-rumped Sandpiper, Jacquie Tinker



Short-billed Dowitcher, Jacquie Tinker

Tomhannock Reservoir, November 18, 2023, Naomi Lloyd

Seven members of HMBC and ADABC set off on our annual joint trip around the Tomhannock into a cool morning with misty rain. The reservoir as a whole was quiet but we made some good sightings along the way. A pair of adult Bald Eagles watched over the south end of the reservoir where we found small numbers of most of the expected duck species, including a flyover flock of Cormorants. The beaver dam at Ford Road bridge had been breached and the beaver swam not far off, probably strategizing a rebuild. Our best sighting of the day was a flock of 12 Common Loons near Nortonville Road. We learned there were over 30 Loons on the lake later in the day, including a Red-throated which stuck around Sunday when the big group had departed.

Passerine numbers were low - we had a few unidentifiable sparrows skulking. Nearly everywhere we stopped had a Belted Kingfisher and at least one Great Blue Heron. The same mild weather keeping the waterfowl north of us encouraged them to linger. We ended up with seven duck species plus Canada Geese.

Our final total was 32 species (and a few unknowns), on the low end of average. I'm still trying to pick the perfect date for Peak Duck! Thanks to everyone who participated - hope to see you again next year!

Ebird trip checklist:

<https://ebird.org/tripreport/172609>

Upcoming HMBC Programs

Date and Time: Monday, December 4, 2023, 6:30 – 8:00pm

Location: Five Rivers EEC, Delmar

Topic: Birding Costa Rica Part II (And HMBC Holiday Party)

Speaker: Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

The lovely Central American country of Costa Rica is smaller than West Virginia, yet contains more than 900 bird species, nearly one-tenth of the world's total. Toucans, Trogons, Motmots, Woodcreepers and more than 50 species of hummingbirds are among the draws for birders and naturalists from around the world to its tropical rainforests and other habitats. Costa Rica has set aside nearly one third of its land in national parks and preserves, from coastal lowlands to volcanic highlands. In this program, Scott and Denise will showcase some of the birds of the Caribbean foothills and lowlands of this tropical land, along with a sense of the experience of visiting this nature mecca.

All are invited (but not required) to bring a snack, dessert, or non-alcoholic beverage to share!



White-necked Jacobin



Collared Aricari

Date and Time: Monday, January 8, 2024 6:30 – 8:00pm

Location: Zoom Only

Topic: The Birds of Central Park

Speaker: Sundar Das Ruben Giron

Ruben Giron is a birder based in Manhattan and has been an active birder for a little over 12 yrs. He does the majority of his birding in Central Park which is rated on the top 10 list by Audubon for birding in the US. The majority of his pictures are from this amazing park. Ruben has worked as a Registered Nurse, Health and Wellness coach and is a certified Mindfulness teacher. Prior to studying mindfulness, he lived in a Yoga Ashram (community) for 16 yrs where he cultivated a practice to find his inner Joy. Birding has been a form of joy and a type of meditation which has helped him grow in many different ways.



Upcoming HMBC Programs *(continued)*

Date and Time: Monday, February 5, 2024 6:30 – 8:00pm

Location: Zoom Only

Topic: Birdie Big Year: Elevating Women Birders

Speaker: Tiffany Kersten

Tiffany Kersten didn't set out to do a Big Year, but after a series of unanticipated and serendipitous events, she suddenly found herself amidst one. As a sexual assault survivor, she spent 2021 traveling to all corners of the Lower 48 States, tallying birds and gifting personal safety alarms to women she met along the way. Her goal was to see 700 species, and to raise awareness of women's safety in the outdoors. She ended up surpassing her goal and setting a new record, of 726 species. In her presentation, Tiffany will lead us through the fear, empowerment, struggles, and healing that all played vital roles in the personal growth she experienced on this wild adventure.

Tiffany Kersten is a Wisconsin native. She holds a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology from Northland College, and has spent over a decade as an environmental educator, teaching about bird migration with the Cape May Bird Observatory, monitoring shorebirds on Cape Cod, banding Honeycreepers in Hawaii, and finally landing in South Texas where she worked at Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge and then managed the McAllen Nature Center. After completing her Lower 48 States Big Year in 2021, she founded her own company, Nature Ninja Birding Tours. She guides primarily in the Rio Grande Valley of South Texas, and offers international tours as well.



Date and Time: Monday, March 4, 2024 6:30 – 8:00pm

Location: TBA

Topic: Iceland

Speaker: Bruce Dudek

Details TBA

Upcoming HMBC Programs *(continued)*

April, 2024: HMBC Annual Meeting and Program

Details TBA

Date and Time: Monday, May 6, 2024 6:30 – 8:00pm

Location: Five Rivers EEC, Delmar

Topic: Birding Belize

Speaker: John Hershey

Details TBA

Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

c/o Five Rivers EEC

56 Game Farm Road

Delmar, NY 12054