

Feathers

EGRETS LEARN FAST

by Jeff Schoonmaker

I stopped halfway across the short causeway connecting Treasure Island with St Pete's Beach, Florida, to watch a couple of active dolphins repeatedly breaking the surface of the inter-coastal waterway. When I started down the other half of the bridge I spotted an Anhinga on the post of a pier. Getting my binoculars on it revealed the presence of another bird on the opposite post. It was a hawk! Since I had only seen a Red-tailed Hawk so far on this trip, I was very motivated to identify this predominantly gray and white bird. Was it a Cooper's? I thought of racing across the remainder of the bridge and around to the Ron McKenney park for a closer look from another angle in order to make a definitive ID. Finally it hit me: the "hawk" was a fake, a painted wooden model. That explained why it hadn't moved a feather or turned its head while I was studying it, and why its colors were all wrong, and why its belly pattern didn't match any known species of any variety anywhere in the world. I felt really foolish, and I was glad I wasn't leading a group of birders.

A few minutes later I arrived at the park. As I walked toward the pier two gleaming Great Egrets flew by and landed on the grass near the park's pier where a man and his young son were fishing. Their activity had clearly drawn the attention of the egrets which stood and eyed the humans intently. After a few minutes, father and son packed up and left the park. I walked slowly out to the top of the T-shaped pier and then as far to the right as possible to be closest to the birds. I enjoyed staring at them 8 times closer than as close as I already was.

Then I had a mischievous thought. Could the egrets be fooled by feigning a standard fisherman's line-casting motion? So I crouched down below the level of the railing as if I were baiting a hook; then I stood up with my fists together holding an imaginary pole. I held my fists over my shoulder and flung them swiftly forward. Immediately both egrets sprang up and flew toward me! Cool! They circled around me only once before they realized they'd been had. Then one flew away while the other one landed back near their original spot on the grass. I went back to enjoying close views of it again. After a few minutes I decided to try the ruse again. The remaining egret didn't take the bait. I guess egrets learn fast.



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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As the HMBC Board enters the last quarter of our fiscal year, I have a few brief announcements to share:

- The HMBC nominating committee is about to begin actively seeking help from members to fill several board vacancies. These include both officer positions and at-large board positions. I've used this space before to explain the need we have as an organization for help with Club leadership. New faces and new ideas on the board are always welcome. It's not glamorous, but it's also not especially onerous, and I hope if the committee reaches out to you, you'll recognize our need is real and give the idea serious consideration.
- February is also the end of our annual membership cycle. Expect to see membership renewal notices in your email in the next few weeks. I would encourage people to use the online renewal process if you can as it simplifies everything for our members and for those of us who manage the membership information.
- Lastly, with the influx of snowy owls this winter, I want to again remind everyone to be mindful that HMBC fully endorses the ABA Code of Birding Ethics, which can be found at: <http://listing.aba.org/ethics/>. There have been recent stories in the area claiming people have been observed approaching too closely to snowy owls and encroaching on private land to do so. As I told one person who complained to me as HMBC president about this behavior, in my 30 years of birding in the area I know the vast majority of local birders adhere to the ABA ethical standards. Likewise, I have no information that HMBC members have had anything to do these reported issues. Nevertheless, as the premier organization in the area dedicated to wild birds and birding, it is well to remember that we collectively have a particular responsibility to set a high standard for ethical behavior at all times when in the field.

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 printing of *Birding New York's Hudson Mohawk Region* is now available

Birding New York's Hudson Mohawk Region, a new printing of HMBC's classic book, is now available. A copy is \$20 for HMBC members and \$25 for non-members. An additional charge of \$5 for postage and handling will be added to the price per book. Contact Gregg Recer gregg_recer@alum.rpi.edu or (518) 899-2678 if you are interested in purchasing a copy. Checks should be made out to ***Hudson Mohawk Bird Club*** and should be sent to:

Gregg Recer

23 Scotch Mist Way

Malta, NY 12020

Field Trip Reports

New Year's Day bird count- Five Rivers EEC – January 1, 2018

Approximately thirty birders braved the frigid weather at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar this first morning of 2018, and recorded thirty-one species, including a Merlin that blasted across the parking lot in pursuit of a Cooper's Hawk as our group was dispersing. Other notable species observed included Northern Flicker, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Winter Wren. Many thanks to the staff at Five Rivers for hosting this fun annual event once again, and especially to Kitty Rusch and director "emeritus" Craig Thompson for leading our two groups.

Tom Williams
Colonie

Upcoming HMBC Programs

Speaker:

John Hershey

Location of Event:

Five Rivers

Date:

February 5, 2018 - 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Topic:

Birding Panama

This program will describe a spring birding trip to Central Panama centered around two popular ecolodges: Canopy Lodge in El Valle de Anton and Canopy Tower in the lowland rainforest of Soberania National Park. Many colorful, iconic tropical birds will be illustrated with photos including: toucans, parrots, trogons, motmots, antbirds, oropendolas, hummingbirds, warblers, and tanagers. Other subjects will include tropical butterflies, reptiles, monkeys, and the quirky, painted “red devil” buses.

John Hershey is a former board member and Secretary of HMBC. He regularly leads HMBC field trips to Vischer Ferry Preserve as well as Cohoes Flats/Peebles Island and Fox Hill Rd. He is officially “semi-retired” but works part-time in private practice in psychology.



Upcoming HMBC Programs (continued)

Speaker:

Jeremy J. Kirchman (New York State Museum, Albany, NY (jeremy.kirchman@nysed.gov))

Location of Event:

Five Rivers

Date:

March 5, 2018 - 7:00pm - 9:00pm

Topic: Altitudinal Range Shifts of Birds at the Southern Periphery of the Boreal Forest

Research published in the last decade has made it increasingly clear that some bird species are shifting their geographic ranges in response to climate warming. Much of this research makes use of data from long-term monitoring projects and repeated state bird atlas projects. Birds are presumed to be moving uphill as well as toward the poles, but detecting altitudinal shifts in mountainous areas with these kinds of data is difficult because the large geographic scale of most survey units masks the substantial elevational variation within their boundaries. In this talk I will describe our effort to directly measure altitudinal range shifts of bird breeding in the Adirondacks by repeating an altitudinal transect survey conducted forty years ago by Ken Able and Barry Noon at Whiteface Mountain. We found evidence for uphill movement of upper and lower range boundaries and of weighted mean altitude over the last 40 years, and for a regional trend toward warmer summers from Adirondack weather station data collected over this same period.

Dr. Jeremy Kirchman has been Curator of Birds at the New York State Museum and Affiliate Professor of Biology at the State University of New York at Albany since 2006. Kirchman grew up in Illinois and first became interested in ornithology during a summer job in the Ozark Mountains in 1993, and has been studying birds ever since. Kirchman earned a BA in biology from Illinois Wesleyan University in 1994, and a MS in zoology from Louisiana State University in 1997. It was at LSU that he first became interested in museum specimen collections. From 1997-2001 he worked at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, IL. In 2006 he completed his Ph.D. in zoology from the University of Florida, writing his dissertation on the evolution of flightless birds on oceanic islands. Dr. Kirchman's current research focus is on the biogeography and evolution of birds that breed in high-elevation "islands" of boreal forest in the Catskills and Adirondacks of New York.

Upcoming HMBC Programs (continued)

Save the Date!! HMBC Annual Meeting, Dinner, and Program

Speaker:

Katerina Paleckova

Location of Event:

Century House, 997 New Loudon Road, Latham

Date:

April 11, 6-10pm

Topic: Albatross Up Close

Observe the beauty and life of Laysan Albatross and other bird species, which inhabit the islands of Midway Atoll, thousands of kilometers from any continent, in the middle of the northern Pacific Ocean. Laysan Albatross are large seabirds with a wingspan of nearly 7 feet. They are able to fly and soar large distances. This collection of photos and videos was collected during a volunteer trip to conduct an albatross nest census. Photographing a large and dense bird colony during breeding and nesting season is an experience unlike any other and the opportunity to be within few inches from these non-threatening birds is exhilarating.

Katerina's curiosity about animals and nature was instilled in her in her grandparents' backyard in the Czech Republic, where she grew up playing with domestic animals while helping tend to the orchard and vegetable patch. She also hiked the nearby mountains since she was 5 and vividly remembers when her father threatened to leave her to the wolves if she didn't keep walking when she got stuck in high snow. She enjoys extreme weather like snowstorms and loves exploring and photographing birds and other wildlife near and far. Katerina hopes to inspire love for nature in others. As a professional she is a graphic design/art director in the brand and package design field. She also frequently works with nature organizations to create logos or signage and enjoys volunteering for bird conservation.



UPCOMING ASCR PROGRAMS

2018 Annual Meeting and Open House - February 24, 2018 : 1pm

Come join the Audubon Society of the Capital Region for their Annual Meeting and Open House event at the Five Rivers Environmental Education Visitor Center! This family friendly and open to the public event will start at 1pm with announcements and the election of officers, followed by the main presentation. Tom Lake, Hudson River Estuary naturalist and educator for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and editor of the NYSDEC online weekly *Hudson River Almanac*, will present “Changing Ecology of the Hudson River Flyway.” The program will illustrate how the Hudson River Flyway has been a critical north-south conduit for migratory birds for at least 12,000 years and how users of the flyway have adapted to the changing environment. After the presentation there will be a Bird and Nature Trivia Quiz open to all.

During the presentation there will be activities ranging from coloring bird images to Bird Bingo for younger folks.

Light food and beverage refreshments will be available and a number of Audubon exhibits will be displayed to share what your local Audubon chapter is doing in the Capital Region and how YOU can participate!

WRITERS' PAGE

Maestro Mockingbird

by Marilyn Hamecher

Sitting, knitting on my front porch... I hear you.
Singing a repertoire...you're not an ordinary Bird.
Trills I don't recognize, others unmistakable.
Captivated by your impressive mocking.

Competing with the Cardinal.
Singing as though you are superior.
Ignoring your presence, the Cardinal carries on.
Accomplished Maestro, turns up the volume.

Impossible not to notice, you're so harmonious.
You're brazen and dazzling, like Pavarotti.
Maestro Mocking Bird, Ambassador of bird songs.
Attention, "Listen to me, while I perform"!

Once, you were just a fledgling now a Virtuoso.
Shamelessly, mimicking unique bird songs.
Choosing the songs, directing your performance.
A Natural, perched on my porch, winging it.

ON NATURE

“How do you know, deep underground,
 Hid in your bed from sight and sound,
 Without a turn in temperature,
 With weather life can scarce endure,
 That light has won a fraction's strength,
 And day put on some moments' length,
 Whereof in merest rote will come,
 Weeks hence, mild airs that do not numb;
 O crocus root, how do you know,
 How do you know?”

Thomas Hardy, “The Year’s Awakening” second stanza

Deep Underground

by Denise Hackert-Stoner

The winter world seems void. Gardens, fields and forests appear halted, at rest under their frozen blanket. Deep. And crisp. And even. And after the seemingly endless parade of flower, fruit and seed that goes on all the rest of the year it seems fitting for nature to take a breather.

But on one typical, cold winter day we saw a shrew running off with one of the sunflower seeds from our bird feeders, and this made me wonder.... Curious about where this little fellow came from and where he was going, I also thought about all of those voles and mice that our wintering owls depend on. How do they survive the winter? Where do they live? And as I looked into these questions I was pretty amazed to learn just how much activity goes on under that seemingly quiet blanket of snow.

Many small mammals like the ones mentioned above, survive winter’s cold just under the snow. They find pockets of air between the snow and the ground (called the subnivean zone). Here, protected by the snow’s insulation, they create tunnels and air vents, collecting food where they can, in a habitat that hovers right around freezing no matter how cold it may be above the snow.

Many animals that normally live on or under the soil (snakes, terrestrial frogs, worms, groundhogs) continue to do so in winter. Most of them hibernate. But some, like the chipmunk, are sort of partial hibernators. They wake occasionally in their underground homes and feast on the stores of food they were so busy collecting in the fall. Similarly, ants will gather in large numbers in the deepest portions of their colonies and spend the winter eating stored food. Nearby may be a myriad of insects which have burrowed deep underground and entered a state of diapause, similar to hibernation in mammals.

Although most plants are inactive during the winter, many trees are always at the ready, and whenever the ground around their roots becomes warm enough (around 32-41 degrees) they will begin to grow, take in water, and otherwise function. And many bulbs, like the crocus praised by Thomas Hardy (above), are busy producing glucose used to keep the plant alive and above freezing throughout the winter.

ON NATURE..... (continued)

So, as that little shrew taught me, there is a world of activity, even in mid-winter, not far beneath our feet. Life goes on, hangs on, makes it through the great gulf of winter to emerge in the spring sunshine ready to take in, to give forth, to live.

For more information on plants and animals in winter:

<https://soilsmatter.wordpress.com/2016/01/14/what-happens-to-soil-in-winter-does-everything-die/>

<https://www.si.edu/spotlight/buginfo/winter>

<https://www.google.com/search?q=Which+insects+survive+the+winter+underground&oq=Which+insects+survive+the+winter+underground&aqs=chrome..69i57j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/group/chipmunks/>



CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT REPORTS

Troy CBC – December 30, 2017

If there's one word to describe this year's Troy Christmas Bird Count, it's "cold." Despite that, 20 participants in seven field parties braved the elements to do the 69th count covering this circle. A word about the history of this count is required. The National Audubon Society has a record of two CBCs attributed to this count circle from 1925 and 1926, pre-dating the formation of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. Little is known about the effort or even what areas were covered. The club ran an experimental count in the count circle on 12/28/1947. While the plan was to run an official count the following year, that did not happen due to bad weather. The club's first count reported to Audubon was for the count on 12/31/1949. A club-sponsored count has been held every year since then, and my statistics are based on the counts from 1949 onward. Nearly every count has been held a few days on either side of New Year's Day, and I refer to past counts with a two-year name (e.g., this year's would be 2017-18).

As previously mentioned, it was cold. Fortunately for the participants and the birds, the wind (<3 mph) was essentially insignificant. It was cloudy all day, with a light snowfall. Temperatures ranged from -1°F to 14°F, with about 4 inches of snow covering the ground. Field parties covered the 15-mile diameter count circle between the hours of 5:19 a.m. and 4:45 p.m.

The weather for the week preceding the count was wintery. Four to five inches of snow fell on Christmas and nighttime temperatures plunged below zero later in the week. Highs for the three days preceding the count were only in the teens. Field parties found little open water, which occurred only at the faster-moving areas on the Mohawk and Hudson. Still water in ponds and on the Tomhannock Reservoir was frozen.

Despite these conditions, a total of 70 species were located on count day, besting the ten-year average by two, the twenty-year average by three, and the thirty-year average by four. This is the best showing in the last six years. For comparison purposes, the most species found was 74, in the 2005-06 count.

Unlike this year's Schenectady CBC, we had new high counts for some species: Eastern Screech-Owl (6, tied highest from 2013-14), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (13, besting 12 seen in 2013-14), Merlin (4, tied last year's high count), Peregrine Falcon (4, tied 2005-06), Fish Crow (67, beating 48 found last year), Winter Wren (3, tied 2006-07), and Dark-eyed Junco (876, exceeding 802 from 1998-99).

There were also some rarer birds, i.e., ones seen on 20 or fewer counts: Mute Swan (6th occurrence), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (15th), Merlin (19th), Peregrine Falcon (17th), Winter Wren (18th), Yellow-rumped Warbler (7th), Eastern Towhee (5th – 2nd time in the last five years), Swamp Sparrow (20th), and Rusty Blackbird (5th – 3rd time in the last four years).

Once again, some random observations:

This CBC gets higher total species numbers when there are odd ducks about. Two Mute Swans hanging out with a flock of Canada Geese on the Hudson south of Lock 1 were quite unexpected! A smattering of Snow Geese and three Ring-necked Ducks were also nice to find in the limited open water.

A single Ring-necked Pheasant, assuredly a released bird, was found for the first time since the 1996-97 count. Ruffed Grouse, which were formerly common on this count, were missed for the third straight year.

Gull numbers were down, as was gull diversity. Only one Iceland Gull was found, and a Lesser Black-backed Gull was counted as a count week bird. We usually get a Glaucous Gull or two, but not this year. Most unusual was that only three Ring-billed Gulls were tallied, lowest since the 1989-90 count when three were also found!

We missed American Kestrel, which has occurred on 59 previous counts, with a maximum of 19 seen way back in 1970-71! However, kestrels have only been found on three of the past ten counts, reflecting changes in habitat or, more likely, that this species is dangerously declining.

Despite cold weather, there were apparently enough food resources to sustain some good half-hardy species: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Winter Wren, Carolina Wren, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Swamp Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird were all species we don't always get. We observed some of these hangers-on consuming poison ivy berries, and wondered how long the supply would last.

Golden-crowned Kinglets were found in three separate sectors, the first time we've had any in the last seven years!

We were lucky to get one flock each of Horned Larks and Snow Buntings in two separate sectors.

Winter finches were represented by a single Purple Finch.

Only six species (American Black Duck, Mallard, Black-capped Chickadee, European Starling, American Tree Sparrow, and House Sparrow) have been found on all 69 counts. Three more (Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, and American Crow) have missed only one count. If we bump it up to 60 of the last 69 counts, 21 species make the cut, and 52 species have been found on 35 or more counts.

The cumulative total of species for the count stands at 144, and there are four additional species that have been only seen on count week.

Thanks to all the participants. I'll say it again - there would be no CBC without you.

Larry Alden – Compiler

118th CBC - Troy Count Circle – December 30, 2017

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total
Snow Goose		3		3	2			8
Canada Goose		105	3295	82	844	60		4386
Mute Swan		2						2
American Black Duck			4	32	22			58
Mallard	14	5	44	166	77	5		311
Ring-necked Duck		3						3
Common Goldeneye			146	65	57			211
Hooded Merganser			35					35
Common Merganser		20	38	25	8	8		99
Ring-necked Pheasant							1	1
Wild Turkey	19	3	6					28
Great Blue Heron							2	2
Bald Eagle	1	4	10	1	4	3		20
Northern Harrier			1			2		3
Sharp-shinned Hawk	1		1	1		1		4
Cooper's Hawk	1	1		1		2	1	6
Red-tailed Hawk	14	21	15	20	6	8	11	95
Rough-legged Hawk	1			1			4	6

Ring-billed Gull				2		1		3
Herring Gull				473				473
Iceland Gull				1				1
Lesser Black-backed Gull				CW				0
Great Black-backed Gull		1		134				135
Rock Pigeon	32	186	94	260	44	612	66	1294
Mourning Dove	85	108	72	87	14	8	81	455
Eastern Screech-Owl	1	1		2			2	6
Great Horned Owl	1	3		1			1	6
Barred Owl	1							1
Belted Kingfisher				1			1	2
Red-bellied Woodpecker	2	18	4	5	3	5	11	48
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	1	4	3		1	2	2	13
Downy Woodpecker	8	20	9	22	8	5	14	86
Hairy Woodpecker	3	8	3		1	2	5	22
Northern Flicker	2	5	2	1	2	3	7	22
Pileated Woodpecker	3	7		2	2	2	2	18
Merlin				3			1	4
Peregrine Falcon				2	1	1		4
Blue Jay	53	69	61	31	16	10	54	294
American Crow	323	473	112	1260	174	739	57	3138
Fish Crow		6		59		2		67
Common Raven		1				1		2
Horned Lark	170							170
Black-capped Chickadee	33	51	72	38	10	46	49	299
Tufted Titmouse	7	24	14	10	7	7	10	79
White-breasted Nuthatch	8	17	13	20	2	4	9	73
Brown Creeper	3	1					1	5
Winter Wren							3	3
Carolina Wren	1	1	3	4	1	1		11
Golden-crowned Kinglet	5	2					6	13
Eastern Bluebird	12	9	6		10	11	1	49
Hermit Thrush							1	1
American Robin		14	4	1	2	5	66	92
Northern Mockingbird	2	1		2		1	4	10
European Starling	525	163	165	1407	37	688	95	3080
Cedar Waxwing	14	28						42
Snow Bunting			100					100
Yellow-rumped Warbler		2						2
Eastern Towhee			1					1
American Tree Sparrow	10	10	15			13	38	86
Song Sparrow	3	1	7	6			12	29
Swamp Sparrow							1	1
White-throated Sparrow	11	25	16	1	4	4	33	94
Dark-eyed Junco	165	210	235	35	24	107	100	876

Northern Cardinal	15	35	34	10	4	18	35	151
Red-winged Blackbird		1					1	2
Rusty Blackbird							1	1
Brown-headed Cowbird	1		10	4		11		26
Purple Finch	1							1
House Finch	1	25	18	18	3	5	63	133
American Goldfinch	2	8	3	14	1	31	8	67
House Sparrow	27	101	124	126	20	55	20	473
Total Birds	1582	1806	4795	4439	1411	2489	880	17342
Total Species	41	46	38	44	32	38	41	70
Count Week Species	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	Total

CW = Denotes species found in the count circle during the count week (3 days on each side of count day) but not on count day. Some species totals do not match the total reported by each individual party (e.g., Bald Eagle). Numbers were adjusted to account for birds which were likely to have been seen by two or more parties.

Bold = record number or tied record for the count.

Group A: Alison VanKeuren, John Kent, Tristan Lowery. 5:19 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. (0.25 hour, 0.25 mile on foot; 5.5 hours, 43 miles by car. Also 1.75 hours, 11.0 miles owling.)

Group B: Larry Alden, Steve Chorvas, Jackie Bogardus. 5:25 a.m. - 4:35 p.m. (1.5 hours, 1.3 miles on foot; 8.25 hours, 70.0 miles by car. Also 1.75 hours, 11.0 miles owling.)

Group C: Rich Guthrie, Jocelyn Cole, Cassie Davis. 7:00 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. (1.0 hour, 0.5 mile on foot; 7.25 hours, 52.3 miles by car.)

Group D: George Steele, Alan Mapes. 6:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (2.5 hours, 0.5 miles on foot; 7.0 hours, 45.0 miles by car. Also 0.5 hour, 2.0 miles owling.)

Group E: Bill Lee, Jamie Taft. 7:30 a.m. – 3:45 p.m. (4.5 hours, 3.5 miles on foot; 3.75 hours, 50.0 miles by car.)

Group F: Kathryn Schneider, Jim de Waal Malefyt. 7:00 a.m. – 4:15 p.m., less 0.25 hour not birding (1.75 hours, 0.75 miles on foot; 7.25 hours, 77.5 miles by car.)

Group G: Steve Mesick, Jackson Mesick, Richard White, David Luck, Kris Saffron. 5:50 a.m. – 4:45 p.m. (2.0 hours, 1.5 miles on foot, 7.75 hours, 79.3 miles by car. Also 1.25 hours, 9.5 miles owling.)

Notes: Hours and times rounded to the nearest quarter hour.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT REPORTS (continued)

Schenectady CBC – December 16, 2017

Twenty-eight participants in nine field parties, and one feeder watcher, took part in the 89th running of the Schenectady Christmas Bird Count on a day with conditions ranging from partly cloudy to cloudy with light snow and temperatures going from a morning low of 14°F to a high of 29°F. An average 1.5 inches of snow covered the count circle and the light wind was not an issue. Field parties covered the 15-mile diameter count circle between the hours of 5:30 a.m. and 4:45 p.m.

It is always interesting to look at the weather in the week preceding the count to see how that affected the results. After a relatively mild stretch of weather in early December, temperatures started reflecting a more typical winter pattern, with days in the 30s and nights in the teens and twenties in the early part of the week. We had our first snowstorm of note on Tuesday, and winds picked up considerably on Wednesday and Thursday as it also got colder. Thursday night's temperatures dropped into the single digits. All this colder weather effectively eliminated most of the open water in the count circle. Only the Mohawk River had much open water, but even that was estimated to be 95% iced over.

Despite these adversities, we still found 63 species, with an additional three count week species (species found in the count circle in the three days on each side of count day but not on count day.) This is above the 10-year average of 61.8 species. The count maximum is 70 species from the count held in December 2007.

Remarkably, a new species was added to the 89-year composite of 139 species when one team found a juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron. (The last new species was Northern Shoveler, added two years ago.) The heron was observed for about five minutes in the Binnikill behind the Computer Sciences building at Schenectady County Community College, at the Schenectady end of the Western Gateway Bridge. "The bird flew in pursued by a Red-tail. It landed on the edge of the ice, while the Red-tail flared up to perch on a tree branch on the opposite side of the water. The heron entered the water and began to hunt for fish as the Red-tail looked on."

Other than the night-heron, it was not a particularly remarkable count. The following species were at least notable due to them having been found on 20 or fewer counts: Wood Duck (18th occurrence), Northern Pintail (11th), Green-winged Teal (7th), scaup species (6th), Hooded Merganser (15th), Black Vulture (4th), Bald Eagle (17th), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (13th), Merlin (9th), and Fox Sparrow (7th). Even with such a long history, it is surprising that there were no record high numbers of individuals of any species.

Some random observations:

Waterfowl diversity is ticking upward, perhaps due to global warming that results in a later onset of winter.

Large numbers of Snow Geese (count week species) migrated through the area several days before the count when a cold front swept through. With little open water, they continued on to the south. If the front had come a few days later, we would have had them on the count.

Rough-legged Hawk (3) was found on the count for the first time in three years.

Great Black-backed Gull was missed for the second straight year, after an unbroken string of 30 years. No other "expected" species was missed this year.

Eleven Eastern Screech-Owls was the highest number found since 15 in 2009.

Two teams went in search of a Snowy Owl reported incidentally from the Albany Airport but they were not able to locate it. As of this writing, the new year has brought reports of at least four Snowys at the airport. Timing is everything!

Pileated Woodpeckers (14) and Common Raven (5) came in at one shy of their record totals.

Although some are found most years, ten Fish Crows was topped only by the twelve that were found in 1992.

Black-capped Chickadees (186) were at their lowest numbers since 1972.

Fifteen Golden-crowned Kinglets is the highest in the past six years.

American Robin numbers (92) were very low – one sixth the ten-year average and one tenth that of last year. Based on other CBC results, the birds usually wintering in the area appear to be wintering farther south this year.

Fox Sparrow was found for the first time since 2003.

There were no “winter finches” other than a single Red-breasted Nuthatch (not a finch, but they follow the same pattern of periodic irruptions). Blackbirds were scattered but present.

The cumulative total of species for the count now stands at 140, and there are four additional species that have been only seen on count week.

Thanks to all the participants – there would be no CBC without you. Doing a CBC is more than just a fun day in the field. It represents a significant citizen science effort that allows scientists to document the climatic and environmental changes occurring all around us.

Larry Alden – Compiler

118th CBC - Schenectady Count Circle - December 16, 2017

	A	B	C	D	D1	E	F	G	H	I/J	Total
Snow Goose				CW							0
Canada Goose	99	232	190	264		48	178	118	4		1133
Wood Duck			3								3
American Black Duck	2	18	2	2			8	15			47
Mallard	69	182	155	98			2	363	103	155	1127
Northern Pintail								1			1
Green-winged Teal								4			4
Scaup sp.		1									1
Hooded Merganser	2	3									3
Common Merganser	37	23						1		13	51
Wild Turkey	4		16	14				5			39
Great Blue Heron							2		2		4
Black-crowned Night-Heron								1			1
Black Vulture			8	35							43
Bald Eagle	3	4					3				8
Northern Harrier			3								3
Sharp-shinned Hawk		1	1					1			3
Cooper's Hawk		2		1			2	1			6

Red-tailed Hawk	7	4	22	9		10	5	11	4	2	74
Rough-legged Hawk	1		1	1							3
Ring-billed Gull	1	3	31	6		4		16	5	6	72
Herring Gull	4		2					1			7
Rock Pigeon	88	36	584	103		20	31	106	69		1037
Mourning Dove	13	121	15	87	20	38	36	31	2	2	365
Eastern Screech-Owl	4	4		3			1				11
Great Horned Owl		1									1
Belted Kingfisher		1		1			1	1		1	5
Red-bellied Woodpecker	8	10	2	10	2		9	6	2	9	58
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker								1		1	2
Downy Woodpecker	8	8	3	12	2	2	13	2	5	2	57
Hairy Woodpecker	1	1	1	4	2	1	3	1	3	3	20
Northern Flicker		2	3	1							6
Pileated Woodpecker	4	3	1	1		2	1			2	14
American Kestrel				1							1
Merlin						1			1		2
Peregrine Falcon								CW			0
Blue Jay	46	48	22	53	3	59	29	26	3	10	299
American Crow	31	36	241	38	1	19	70	309	20	290	1055
Fish Crow			1					1		8	10
Common Raven			2			1	2				5
Black-capped Chickadee	18	20	5	32	2	37	40	12	9	11	186
Tufted Titmouse	7	5	2	19	3	11	14	8	1	6	76
Red-breasted Nuthatch						1					1
White-breasted Nuthatch	33	8	4	10		5	3		4	13	80
Brown Creeper						1					1
Carolina Wren	1		3	1	1	1	4	2		1	14
Winter Wren	1										1
Golden-crowned Kinglet	3			3		2	7				15
Eastern Bluebird		9	11	6		2		1			29
American Robin	12	44	1	9	1	9	2		2	12	92
Northern Mockingbird		2	4	1		1	1				9
European Starling	29	138	155	545	4	39	165	98	20	48	1241
Cedar Waxwing				11	1		14				26
American Tree Sparrow	8	5	8	7	2	2	2	3			37
Fox Sparrow						1					1
Song Sparrow			4						7		11
Swamp Sparrow		1									1
White-throated Sparrow	2	14		12	2	3	18	16	2		69
Dark-eyed Junco	32	50	51	71	2	67	36	24	45	17	395
Northern Cardinal	19	29	6	17	5	11	11	14	8	6	126
Red-winged Blackbird	26				6						32
Common Grackle				CW							0
Brown-headed Cowbird	9				2	2					13

House Finch		42	2	48	5	11	13	83	4		208
American Goldfinch	43	19	10	28	3	4	8	60	2	25	202
House Sparrow	10	18	87	46	25	47	18	32	15	22	320
Total Birds	685	1148	1662	1610	94	462	752	1375	342	665	8767
Total Species	36	38	38	38	21	32	34	35	25	24	63
Count Week Species	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	3
	A	B	C	D	D1	E	F	G	H	I/J	Total

CW = Denotes species found in the count circle during the count week (3 days on each side of count day) but not on count day.

Some species totals do not match the total reported by each individual party (e.g., Bald Eagle). Numbers were adjusted to account for birds which were likely to have been seen by two or more parties.

Bold = record number or tied record for the count.

Group A: Bob Yunick, Ted Hicks. 6:15 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (7.5 hours, 4.25 miles on foot; 1.75 hours, 49.5 miles by car. Also 0.5 hour, 6.0 miles owling.)

Group B: Eric Molho, John Hershey, Robert Pastel, Sasha Keyel. 6:10 a.m. – 6:40 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (2.75 hours, 3 miles on foot; 5.25 hours, 65 miles by car. Also 0.5 hour, 0.25 mile owling.)

Group C: Gregg Recer, Cathy Graichen, Scott Stoner, Denise Hackert-Stoner. 7:00 a.m. – 4:45 p.m. (1.75 hours, 1.2 miles on foot; 8.0 hours, 72.7 miles by car.)

Group D: Larry Alden, Neal Reilly. 5:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (2.0 hours, 2.8 miles on foot; 7.0 hours, 58.0 miles by car. Also 1.5 hours, 11.5 miles owling.)

Group E: Tom Williams, Colleen Williams, Naomi Lloyd, Tristan Lowery. 7:00 a.m. – 4:15 p.m., less 1.0 hour not birding (1.25 hours, 1.5 miles on foot; 4.25 hours, 60.0 miles by car; 2.75 hours yard watch.)

Group F: George Steele, Alan Mapes, John Roosenberg, Sr., John Roosenberg II. 5:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. (4.5 hours, 3.0 miles on foot; 5.0 hours, 58.5 miles by car. Also 1.5 hours, 4.0 miles owling.)

Group G: Bill Lee, Jamie Taft, Janet Betlejeskie. 7:15 a.m. - 3:45 p.m., less 0.5 hour not birding (4.5 hours, 3.5 miles on foot; 3.5 hours, 57.0 miles by car.)

Group H: Kathleen LoGiudice, John Blanchard, Hank Stebbins. 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., less 1.25 hours not birding (3.5 hours, 3.0 miles on foot; 2.25 hours, 19.9 miles by car.)

Group I/J: Steve Mesick, Linda Neil. 8:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m., less 0.25 hour not birding (2.5 hours, 3.8 miles on foot; 4.0 hours, 24.7 miles by car.)

D1: Paul Novak – Feeder watcher in Sector D. (3.5 hours.)

Notes: Hours and times rounded to the nearest quarter hour.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT REPORTS (continued)

Saratoga County CBC – December 14, 2017

The Saratoga Christmas Bird Count took place on December 14th under mostly clear skies with some light snow in the morning. Although not an officially sponsored count of the HMBC, it is conducted within the club's birding territory and many club members are participants including, this year, Bill Lee, Kate Storms, Naomi Lloyd, Steve Mesick, George Green, Ron Harrower, Mark Fitzsimmons and others.

Due to good weather, open water on Saratoga Lake and of course the dedication of our counters we were able to record 65 species. Although there were no birds new to list we did come close. Barb Putnam was chasing a possible fox sparrow that got away and many of us looked for a snowy owl reported on territory earlier in the week without success.

We had a great count of raptors including all the common ones with the exception of merlin and barred owl. Ron Harrower managed to spot a Peregrine Falcon over Saratoga Lake which we haven't had on the count for many years. Two groups spotted small flocks of snow geese flying overhead (could have been the same group) and a ruffed grouse was also spotted after a many year drought

Thanks to all participants. i plan to keep the first Thursday of the count period for next year in order to avoid conflict with other counts.

Jean Holcomb, Count Coordinator

Albany County CBC – Alan Mapes

A report for the 32nd annual Albany County Christmas Bird Count, held this year on Sunday, December 17. Thanks go to all of the 23 participants who spent the day tramping and driving all over the count circle, tallying the birds.

We found a total of 71 species, besting our all-time average of 68. Highlights included White-winged Scoter (1), Red-shouldered Hawk (2), Rough-legged Hawk (2), Horned Lark (18), White-crowned Sparrow (2 – second time ever on the count), Rusty Blackbird (2 – second time on the count), Snow Bunting (16) and Pine Siskin (30).

Species found in relatively high numbers included Common Goldeneye (64 – 2nd highest ever for the count), Rock Pigeon (1054 – highest ever), Mourning Dove (2nd highest), Golden-crowned Kinglet, White-throated Sparrow (2nd highest), Red-winged Blackbird (52 -highest ever), and Pine Siskin (2nd highest).

Species found in relatively low numbers included most waterfowl, gulls, Northern Harrier, Ruffed Grouse (none), Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch (none), Eastern Bluebird, Northern Mockingbird and American Goldfinch.

I hope even more of you can join us for the 33rd annual count on December 16, 2018.

Upcoming Field Trips

FEBRUARY

Thursday, February 1, DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS, FORT EDWARD GRASSLANDS

Coordinators/Leaders: Scott Stoner & Denise Hackert-Stoner 518-785-6760 scottjstoner@aol.com

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. Contact the coordinators no later than **February 1st**, to sign up and get the meeting time and place. Space is limited, and carpooling will be necessary.

Saturday, February 3, FORT EDWARD GRASSLANDS (Washington County; afternoon through dusk) **Snow date: Sunday, February 4**

Coordinators/Leaders: Scott Stoner & Denise Hackert-Stoner 518-785-6760 scottjstoner@aol.com

Short-eared Owls are seen most winters in the Fort Edward Grasslands, an Important Bird Area in Washington County. This area is also known for other wintering raptors such as Rough-legged Hawks, Red-tailed Hawks, and Northern Harriers. Wintering field birds including Horned Lark, Snow Bunting, and Eastern Bluebird are good possibilities, while Lapland Longspur and Northern Shrike are less likely. If Snowy Owl has been reported, we will make a special effort to see it.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. Contact the coordinators no later than **February 1st** to sign up and get the meeting time and place. Space is limited, and carpooling will be necessary.

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

Coordinator/Leaders: Gregg Recer and Cathy Graichen 518-899-2678 gregg.recer@gmail.com

The Cape Ann and the Newburyport/Plum Island, MA, areas are prime winter birding locations. We will spend Saturday on Cape Ann's shoreline looking for white-winged gulls, wintering sea ducks such as Harlequins, scoters, eiders and loons as well as other winter visitors like Purple Sandpipers and Guillemot. Sunday will be spent at Newburyport and Plum Island searching for more sea birds, Harriers, Snowy Owl, etc. Monday morning is make-up time where we will pick up any spots and target species missed. Plan 2 to 3 nights in a motel. 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 28th to reserve a spot and for hotel reservation information.

Saturday, February 24, BIRDING BY SNOWSHOE AT FIVE RIVERS EEC (Albany County; morning)

Coordinator/Leader: Ray Perry 518-475-0291 raymond.perry@dec.ny.gov (Joint trip with the Audubon Society of the Capital Region.)

Join Ray for a special outing of birding by snowshoe. Meet at the Visitor Center at 9 a.m. for a brief introduction to snowshoeing, then strap on the waffle stompers and go over the meadow and through the woods in search of winter specialties. The program is geared for the birding/snowshoeing novice and is open to the public, but space is limited. The snowshoes are provided through the Friends of Five Rivers; please call in advance to reserve. If there is insufficient snow, we will go on foot. In the event of severe weather, this program may be cancelled.

Meet at the Five Rivers Visitor Center at 9 a.m.

Please call Five Rivers at 518-475-0291 by Wednesday, February 21st to register.

Upcoming Field Trips (continued)

Saturday, March 17, DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS, CORNING RIVERFRONT PARK/NYS MUSEUM ORNITHOLOGY COLLECTION (Trip is March 24)

Coordinator/Leader: Jeremy Kirchman jeremykirchman@gmail.com (preferred) or 518-708-3617

Saturday, March 24, CORNING RIVERFRONT PARK/NYS MUSEUM ORNITHOLOGY COLLECTION (Albany County; morning)

Coordinator/Leader: Jeremy Kirchman - jeremykirchman@gmail.com - 518-708-3617

We'll bird the Corning Riverfront Park before heading over to the New York State Museum for a behind-the-scenes tour of its ornithological collections.

Albany's Corning Riverfront Park is a city-owned, 15-acre urban waterfront property along the Hudson River, known as Corning Preserve until recently. While its former name may have overstated the actual state of wildlife abundance, diversity, and habitat found there, it remains the best public access to the Hudson River in downtown Albany. In late March, dedicated river watching can yield occasional rewards. In recent years, several species of diving ducks, grebes, all three North American mergansers, and returning Double-crested Cormorants have been recorded there as early spring migrants. The river can also attract concentrations of gulls, wintering Bald Eagles, and a pair of Peregrine Falcons that nests at the nearby Dunn Memorial Bridge. The Hudson is easily viewed from the park's leisurely, level walking paths, and we can also check the brushy habitat around the riverside pond for landbirds.

Donut and coffee stop at Cider Belly en route to the NYSM at approximately 10:30. Tour begins when all are reassembled in the NYSM lobby, and will last about one hour.

Meet at the Corning Riverfront Park parking area along Quay St. in Albany at 8:30 am.

RESERVATIONS REQUIRED. Contact the coordinator no later than Mar. 17th, to sign up. There is a limit of 15 people, HMBC members have preference.

Saturday, March 31, HUDSON RIVER SOUTH (Greene & Columbia Counties; morning)

Coordinators/Leaders: Bill Cook 518- 851-2678 cook@sunycgcc.edu ~and~ Tom Williams 518-857-2176 trwdsd@yahoo.com
(Joint trip with the Alan DeVoe Bird Club.)

We will search the Hudson River from the Germantown Boat Launch for Great Cormorants, Bald Eagles, and waterfowl; the group will then move on to the RamsHorn-Livingston Sanctuary in Catskill, looking for resident birds, and early migrants such as Eastern Phoebe, Brown Creeper, kinglets, and Fox Sparrow.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the Germantown Boat Launch/Ernest R. Lasher Memorial Park in Germantown.

Saturday, April 7, VOSBURGH MARSH (Greene County; morning)

Coordinator/Leader: Al Mapes 518-817-1512 alanmapes@gmail.com

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 8:00 a.m. at the Cocksackie boat launch. From the intersection of Rt. 9W and Rt. 385 in Cocksackie, go east on Rt. 385 (Mansion St.) to the bottom of the long hill. Turn left onto Reed Street, then left again on S. River Street and into the State boat launch parking lot.

Upcoming Field Trips (continued)

Saturday, April 14, EARLY MIGRANTS AT FIVE RIVERS EEC (Albany County; morning)

Coordinators/Leaders: Tom and Colleen Williams 518-857-2176 trwdsd@yahoo.com

Join us for a three mile walk throughout the Five Rivers property. We will explore fields, ponds and marshes, portions of the service road, the Vlomankill corridor, and finish with a loop around the Beaver Pond. More than forty bird species can be observed on a favorable day in mid-April.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. in the parking lot at Five Rivers EEC in Delmar. Note new parking arrangement and follow signs.

Sunday, April 15, VISCHER FERRY NATURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVE (VFNHP) (Saratoga County; morning)

Coordinator: John Hershey 518-371-3114 hersheyj@nycap.rr.com

We will start out on this trip looking for spring waterfowl such as American Wigeon, Green and Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, and Pied-billed Grebe. Other possibilities include Virginia Rail, American Bittern, Palm Warbler and Rusty Blackbird.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the VFNHP main entrance, at the intersection of Riverview and Van Vranken Rds. in Clifton Park.

Saturday, April 28, PEBBLES ISLAND STATE PARK (Saratoga County; morning)

Coordinator: Gary Goodness 518-862-9260 goodness@nycap.rr.com

Peebles Island is an ideal environment to watch spring migration. Expect to see songbirds, sandpipers, waterfowl and the rest of an early mix of migrants.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the parking lot of Peebles Island SP. There may be a State Park parking fee, so carpool if you can.

Sunday, April 29, POWELL SANCTUARY (Columbia County; morning)

Coordinator: Kathy Schneider 518-248-8665 fallline@nycap.rr.com (Joint trip with the Alan DeVoe Bird Club.)

This 145-acre preserve has been owned and managed by the Alan Devoe Bird Club since 1959. It features a beaver pond with an observation blind, neighboring farm fields, and Dorson's Rock, a sandstone ledge that offers good hawk watching and a panoramic view of the Hudson Valley. There are 3 miles of moderate, well-marked trails throughout the sanctuary, which is mostly woods. The club's list for this site has more than 200 species, including 20 species of warblers.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Wilson M. Powell Wildlife Sanctuary, 75 Hunt Club Road, Old Chatham. From the junction of County Route 13 and Albany Turnpike in the hamlet of Old Chatham, travel southwest on County Route 13 for 0.9 miles to Pitt Hall Road on the left, where two signs mark the road to Powell House and the sanctuary. Follow Pitt Hall Road 0.25 miles, then bear left (east) onto Hunt Club Road and continue 0.25 miles to the main parking lot.

Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

c/o Five Rivers EEC

56 Game Farm Road

Delmar, NY 12054