

June 2023
Volume 83 No 3

Feathers

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

Woodcock Banding Observation, SUNY Cobleskill April 13, 2023 Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

On Thursday evening, April 13th, six of us (including two of our grandchildren) joined a class led by Dr. Roger Masse from SUNY Cobleskill to enjoy the courtship display of American Woodcock and observe the netting and banding process.

When we arrived at the observation site on this very hot (upper 80s F) early evening we were amazed at the speed with which the students, laden with nets and poles, bounded up the very steep hill leading to the Woodcock grounds. Following at a slower pace, we caught up to watch as the nets and poles went up. Dr. Masse then proceeded with introductions and shared information about these fascinating birds. As the evening progressed (and temperatures dropped), we were treated to a sky lit up by Venus, which was joined by a sky full of stars at around the same time the first "Peent" was heard. Many of those attending could see the display flight, and all of us got to see the one bird that was captured and bagged.

After listening to the peenting calls and the twittering of the flight as darkness enveloped us, and when Dr. Masse was satisfied that no other birds were likely to be caught, the real fun began, as we joined the students in a circle as the captive bird was taken out of the bag, weighed and measured, determined to be a male of at least two years of age, banded, gently passed around for all to hold, and released.

This was a fun and educational evening which we hope will be repeated in the future. Other birds observed (mostly by ear) were American Robin, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl, Mourning Dove, and Winter Wren.

Thanks to all who attended, and especially to Roger and his students for their generous hospitality, and for the use of his photos for this article.
(See photos from this trip on p.71)

(continued on p 71)

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Spring always flies by so quickly for birders. Every June, it's always a somewhat bewildering experience taking stock of all the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club and its members have done in just the last few weeks of hectic spring birding, when March and the very beginning of migration – way back when all of us had yet to see our very first warbler for the year – really do feel like ages ago. But as always, we've done a lot. We enjoyed many wonderful spring migration field trips, attended by many longtime trip leaders and seasoned club members, but which also welcomed lots of curious first-time birders with events like our beginner birder workshops. Of course, beloved traditions like Birds and Breakfast at Five Rivers and our annual Mother's Day trip to Vischer Ferry were popular and very birdy outings, but we also got off the beaten path this spring with trips to some new locations, like Albany's Washington Park. Our monthly program series has continued to host engaging and educational talks on a variety of subjects, including a great presentation by Chad Witko for our annual meeting in April. Behind the scenes, the HMBC board is hard at work on a number of projects, including an exciting refurbishment of our club log, which we hope to unveil soon.

Birding often slows down a bit in the summer, but not for this club – and particularly not during the fourth year of the New York State Breeding Bird Atlas! We have field trips scheduled for every weekend in June, including an exciting series of Breeding Bird Atlas trips led by Project Coordinator Julie Hart, two more fun trips in July, and then to end the summer, an out-of-area trip to Jamaica Bay and our traditional nighthawk counts at the Albany Pine Bush. So, there's lots to do this summer and we'd love to see you. And as always, if you're interested in helping out with the club in any way, please contact me at president@hmbc.net.

Good birding!

Tristan Lowery
President, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

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

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UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

Saturday, June 3, 2023 7:00AM

Location: Cherry Plain State Park (Rensselaer County; morning)

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

Cherry Plain State Park is situated on the Rensselaer Plateau of the Capital District. The relatively high elevation, cool climate and a variety of forested and wetland habitats make this a good area for northern species. Nesting species include Least Flycatcher, Dark-eyed Junco, White-throated Sparrow, Scarlet Tanager, Common Raven, Broad-winged Hawk, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Black-and-White and Yellow-rumped Warblers.

Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Veery, Hermit Thrush and Winter Wren also nest here.

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Hannaford parking lot on the right side of Route 43, just past the intersection of Route 150 in West Sand Lake, to carpool to the park.

Sunday, June 4, 2023 8:00AM

Location: Strawberry Fields Nature Preserve (Montgomery County; morning)

Coordinator: Ellen Pemrick 518-366-5360 lnmp@nycap.rr.com

Strawberry Fields is located on Cranes Hollow Road in the Town of Amsterdam. It includes a nature preserve protected under a conservation easement with MHLIC, a family home, and a working farm, and features 2.5 miles of trails through fields and forest. Birds found here include Bobolink, Eastern Bluebird, Baltimore Oriole, Common Yellowthroat and Ovenbird. We'll walk the trails and see what turns up. Be prepared for possible wet or muddy conditions and tall grass.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the designated parking area at the preserve.

Directions can be found at: mohawkhudson.org/our-preserves/strawberry-fields-nature-preserve

Saturday, June 10, 2023 7:30AM

Location: Stillwater School Nature Trail/Lock 4 State Canal Park (Saratoga and Rensselaer Counties; morning)

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

The Stillwater School Nature Trail has an expansive open marsh on the north side, with Green Heron, Virginia Rail and Sora often present. Least Bittern is also possible. The wetland continues along the south side but is not as open. The wide trail continues to the Hudson where it turns left and follows the river through a deciduous forest. We will then drive south about 1.7 miles to Lock 4 State Canal Park to check rocky shoals on the Hoosic River for shorebirds, and walk the woodlands around the Lock.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the trail entrance. Turn off Rt 4 in Stillwater at the road to the school complex, and drive to the end. The trail starts at a chain link gate.

Sunday, June 11, 2023 7:00AM

Location: Plotter Kill Nature Preserve (Schenectady County; morning) (joint trip with NY Breeding Bird Atlas)

Coordinator: Julie Hart julie.hart@dec.ny.gov

Join the Atlas as we see what birds are breeding in the Preserve. We'll explore the nature trails through forest and field and will likely run into a Louisiana Waterthrush along the stream. This should be prime time for nest building so we'll be keeping an eye out for any birds carrying nesting material. We'll be contributing data to the Rotterdam Junction CE atlas block.

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the trailhead parking on Mariaville Rd.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS (CONTINUED)

Saturday, June 17, 2023 7:30AM

Location: Beebe Hill Multiple Use Area (Columbia County; morning) (joint trip with NY Breeding Bird Atlas)

Coordinator: Julie Hart julie.hart@dec.ny.gov

We'll walk the trails at Beebe Hill to see what birds we can find breeding and contribute to the State Line NW atlas block. We should find some marsh birds near the pond and forest interior birds on the hike to the fire tower. We'll pose for some gorgeous views at the top.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the fire tower trailhead parking (on the north end of Barrett Pond) on Beebe Forest Rd.

Saturday, June 24, 2023 7:00AM

Location: Swatling Falls Nature Trails and Halfmoon Town Park (Saratoga County; morning) (joint trip with NY Breeding Bird Atlas)

Coordinator: Julie Hart julie.hart@dec.ny.gov

Explore the trails at Swatling Falls Nature Trails in Halfmoon. We'll experience a variety of habitats including forest, field, and shrub as well as see the falls. After we've explored the trails we'll head over to Halfmoon Town Park to add some more open habitat birds to our day list. We'll document any breeding birds for the Troy North NW atlas block.

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the trailhead parking on Swatling Rd.

Sunday, July 9, 2023 7:30AM

Location: Berlin Mountain (Rensselaer County; morning) (joint trip with NY Breeding Bird Atlas)

Coordinator: Coordinator: Julie Hart julie.hart@dec.ny.gov

Join the NY Breeding Bird Atlas for a hike up Berlin Mountain from Green Hollow Rd. Experience a diversity of habitat as we go up in elevation. We will be paying attention to breeding birds in Atlas block Berlin CE including Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Blue-winged Warblers on the slopes to Mourning Warbler at the summit. This trip requires hiking 2.3 miles uphill and then returning on the same route, though it is a fairly easy grade dirt road up to the ridge and we will be walking slowly to hear the birds. Bring a packed lunch, sturdy shoes, and plenty of water.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the trailhead parking lot at the end of Green Hollow Rd.

Saturday, July 15, 2023 7:00AM

Location: Fulton County, Leader's Choice (Fulton County; morning)

Coordinator: David Harrison 908-892-5495 david.harrison57@earthlink.net

Leader's Choice in the foothills of the Adirondacks with good chances for some of our region's more northern breeders – maybe even Mourning Warbler if we're lucky. Anticipate up to 6 miles of hiking on moderate terrain.

Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the Fulton County Visitors Center on the NE side of the Rt. 29 & 30 traffic circle about 9 miles north of Thruway exit 27.

WRITERS PAGE



Loggerhead Shrike Poem

By: Marilyn Hamecher

It was my very first trip to Rocky Point or Puerto Panesco, Mexico.
 When my eye caught a Loggerhead Shrike perched upon a fence pole.
 I spotted this beautifully marked, little bird, with a very large head.
 I knew about his bizarre habits of impaling his prey, as I had read.

Loggerheads lack the sharp talons, unlike raptors, that skewer their prey.
 They impale their prey on thorns or barbed wire fences, it's the only way.
 The upper part of their hooked bill features their "Tomial teeth" built in.
 Like the Falcon, the Shrike seizes and disables their prey from within.

They have been nicknamed "Butcherbirds" for the habit of skewering prey.
 Their head, in relation to the body, is large but it works for them, it's OK.
 They wedge their kills in tight places, for easy eating and saving for later.
 Creating pantries or larders to sustain them when finding food gets harder.

During courtships the male performs flight displays and brings her the grub.
 Together, they build a substantial nest in a low, dense thorny bush or shrub.
 The male's task is to feed his mate, while she sits on the nest and incubates.
 Having a well stacked larder helps the male Shrike to attract a future mate.

They will feed their nestlings, which will leave the nest within 2 - 3 weeks.
 Both Loggerheads continue their parenting skills for another 3 – 4 weeks.
 Newly fledged shrikes perform versions of adult hunting skills and shtick.
 Using their bills, grabbing an object, impaling it, and try to make it stick.

A Shrike's song is very similar to our beloved Mockingbird sound.
 Hunting on elevated perches and scanning fields from above ground.
 They flash their white wing patches to startle their prey out of hiding.
 Often they copy the Kestrel's eating habits of hunting and hovering.

ON NATURE

“Looking”

By Denise Hackert-Stoner

You are members of a bird club, so of course, you look closely and pay attention to detail. I’m still amazed at people who can easily distinguish between the Lesser and Greater Yellowlegs. So this isn’t a column about paying attention to details in bird identification. But it is about looking. It’s about looking at the details in the beautiful things that keep the birds company. It’s about, perhaps, widening our visual expectations while outdoors.

We are heading into summer, and the fields we scope for Bobolinks, the forests we search for Brown Creepers, even the waters we scan for Kingfishers and Kingbirds, are bursting with non-avian life as well. Wildflowers, forest understory plants and the trees themselves, water lilies and their aquatic plant companions, all have their own stories to tell. And yes, many of them attract or provide cover for birds, but they also support a host of insects as well.

For instance, we are surrounded by Queen Anne’s Lace along field trails, and as the summer progresses we will see more and more of it. Let’s take a closer look at this plant which is so common and widespread that often we don’t even notice it.

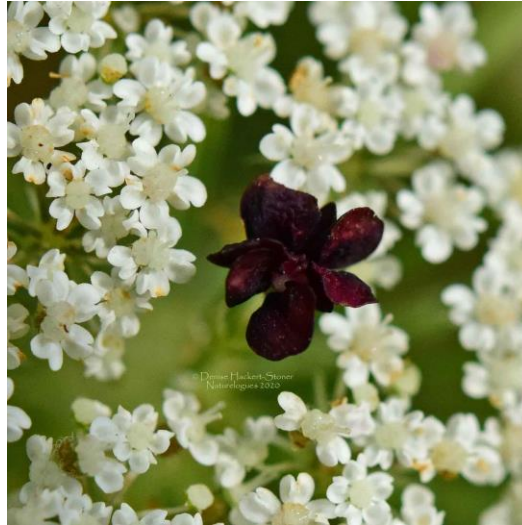


The dark red/purple flower in the center of many Queen Anne’s Lace flowers has been of interest for many years. Even the name of the plant derives from a legend told about the red flower.



ON NATURE (CONTINUED)

It was said that Queen Anne, a talented lace-maker, was challenged to create a lace as beautiful as a flower. As she worked, she pricked her finger with her needle, and the red flower represents a drop of royal blood. Much later, Darwin theorized that the red flower has no purpose at all. Even today, theories about the red flower range from pollinator attractant to gall repellent. No one seems to know for sure. I like that. Mysteries are attractive.



All during the summer this plant supports a host of insects. Bees, various kinds of beetles, Ladybugs, butterflies, spiders, and true bugs like Ambush Bugs benefit either by nectaring or hunting among the hundreds of florets on the flower heads of the Queen Anne's Lace.



Crab Spider



Ambush Bug

ON NATURE (CONTINUED)

Later in their lives, the flower heads of the Queen Anne's Lace curl upwards, giving them a bird's nest shape.



This shape protects the seeds within during the fall and winter months ahead. It also provides safe shelter for some visiting or even hibernating insects. If you look closely at the photo below you will see bright eyes shining within a silken shelter within the seed head of a Queen Anne's Lace Flower. To me it looks like a jumping spider's eyes. Could this spider be nesting? Or preparing to hibernate? I don't know for sure, but I love a mystery.



So while you are birding along field trails this summer and into the fall, take a look at these beautiful, abundant flowers. Look for the deep red center flower. And look for insect visitors. You never know what you might find!

Field Trip Reports

April 9, 2023 Vischer Ferry, John Hershey

On this beautiful Easter morning we started out with 10 enthusiastic birders (including one beginner) as we searched for spring waterfowl and early songbirds at Vischer Ferry Preserve. Although the temperature initially was around freezing, the sun shining on the marshes created beautiful, blue and golden reflections and gradually warmed the morning to a more pleasant 50 degrees. Most noteworthy was the fact that the back ponds near the river had a healthy water level and more waterfowl than the more reliable west pond along the towpath. Early on we watched an immature Bald Eagle perched along the west pond. Then we were entertained by the “laughing” call of a Pied-billed Grebe which soon became a frequent sound throughout the Preserve. Other species in this area included Belted Kingfisher, Blue-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, and Bufflehead. Eventually at the back pond we added American Wigeon and Wood Duck to the list and saw many more Ring-necked Ducks (perhaps 70 altogether), plus many more Pied-billed Grebes.

We worked our way around the back pond and then into the adjacent Pine Grove. In this area with the help of some phenomenal birding ears in some members of the group we found at least 5 singing Pine Warblers, many Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets, Cedar Waxwings, and Brown Creepers. At the spruce circle we heard a Hermit Thrush and nearby spotted a Carolina Wren. We followed the Tall Spruce Trail to the towpath and returned to the main entrance. Along the towpath we also were pleased to hear and see several Yellow-rumped Warblers and finally a Great Blue Heron. The total number of woodpeckers for the morning was not high but we definitely managed to get our “woodpecker 6-pack” with Downy, Hairy, Red-bellied, Northern Flicker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and Pileated. The final total for our e-bird list was a surprising 51 species. Thanks to all who participated this morning. (Added is a photo taken at Vischer Ferry yesterday.)

Five Rivers 4-15-23, Scott Stoner

Perhaps it was the unusually warm weather and the prospect of spring arrivals that brought birders out in abundance this morning. I was thrilled to have about 25 people turn out for today's beginning birding walk at DEC's Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar! Many were fairly novice birders, and several of the Club's veteran leaders who also attended were a great asset given the size of the group!

Sampling the Center's variety of habitats, we first encountered Killdeer nesting on the roof of the Visitor Center and American Robin on a nest just outside its front door! Multiple Red-winged Blackbirds were conspicuously present in the small pond adjacent to the building as well.

Song Sparrows, American Goldfinches, Junco, Blue Jay's and more were present, along with a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker near Sunfish Pond.

Eastern Bluebirds and Tree Swallows were actively frequenting the nest boxes in the large field on the east side of the grounds.

Near Recharge Pond, a Brown Thrasher sang from high in a deciduous tree, quite possibly having just arrived overnight (thanks, Naomi). Active Canada Goose nests were observed on several ponds; look for the eggs to hatch in the next couple of weeks!

Ruby-crowned Kinglets continue to actively sing, and at least some people were able to view the one warbler we encountered, a Palm, near Goose Pond.

Field Trip Reports *(Cont...)*

A Sharp-shinned Hawk flew over as we returned to the parking lot, increasing the tally to 26 species, nearly identical to the number of birders!

Many thanks to everyone who turned out on this pleasant spring morning, and I hope you all join the HMBC's other field trips in the busy April and May period!



May 14, 2023, Vischer Ferry Preserve, Gregg Recer

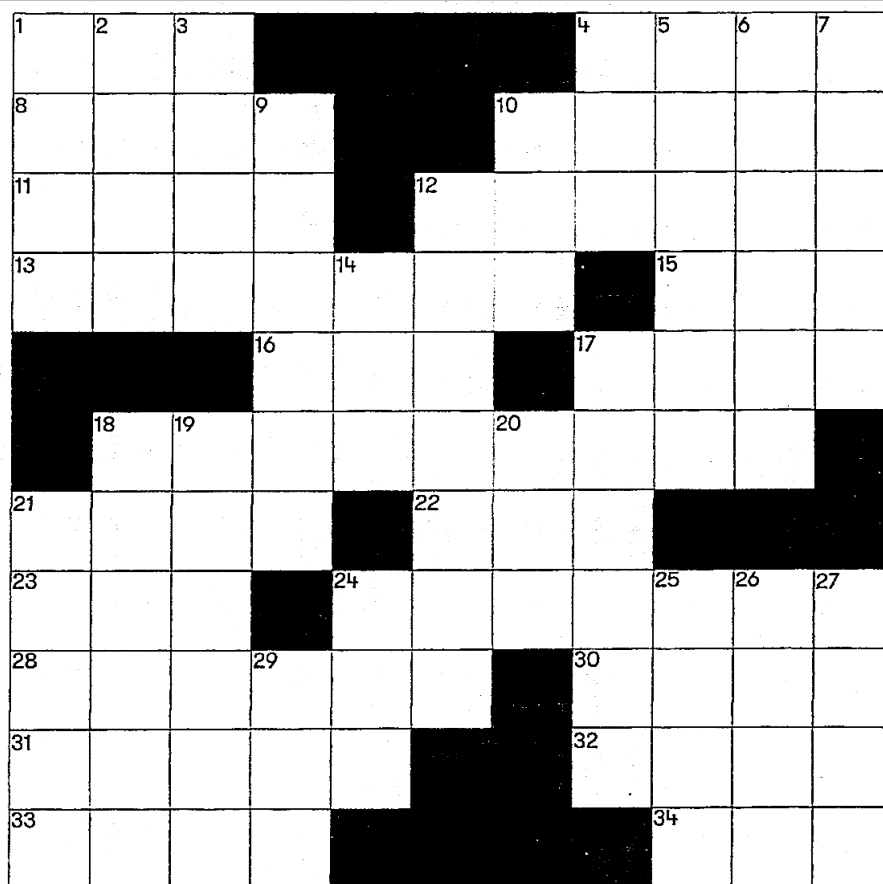
A hearty group of birders convened at Vischer Ferry Preserve this morning for the annual HMBC Mother's Day walk. We took the whole morning and did a long version of the western loop from the Whipple Bridge. It was pretty cool and breezy early, which may have contributed to a slow start, but we still ended up with a cumulative total of nearly 80 species. Highlights included good looks at Lincoln's Sparrow, yellow-billed cuckoo, a soaring Cooper's Hawk, and several warblers including Magnolia and Blackburnian. As always, Yellow Warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, Baltimore Orioles and Warbling Vireos were abundant. A sporadic rolling song was heard that eventually resolved itself as a Mourning Warbler in the woods near the tall spruce circle. As it kept singing, we made multiple attempts from different locations to get a look at the bird, but it never did cooperate. A nice find regardless.

Thanks to all who came out and joined us today.

Woodcock Banding *(continued)*



CROSSWORD PUZZLE BY LARRY ALDEN (SOLUTION ON PAGE 73)



Across

- 1 Coffee holder
- 4 Grifter's specialty
- 8 Saudi or Moroccan
- 10 Aristotle's mentor
- 11 Prefix meaning one trillion
- 12 Wild child
- 13 Northern bird (uncommon)
- 15 67.5 deg., on a compass
- 16 Mayberry mail service abbr.
- 17 Sense
- 18 Northern birds (very rare)
- 21 Competed against
- 22 Not just some
- 23 Discount rack abbr.
- 24 Northern bird (common)
- 28 Change a date?
- 30 Atop
- 31 Cemetery sight
- 32 *Cheers* regular
- 33 European capital
- 34 Like Willie Winkie

Down

- 1 Part of S.T.E.M.
- 2 Nitrogenous waste
- 3 Actress Teri (*Young Frankenstein*, *Mr. Mom*)
- 4 Canon EOS, e.g.
- 5 Lifetime occupation
- 6 Makes amends
- 7 Mushroom with a honeycomb-like cap
- 9 Kept out, or an owl
- 10 Word with annum or diem
- 12 18-minute internet presentation
- 14 "___ tree falls in the forest...."
- 17 Slim-winged raptor
- 18 Electricians, usually
- 19 Comforting tea type
- 20 Inventor Whitney
- 21 Follower of Leo
- 24 Enemy
- 25 Have down pat
- 26 *Raison d'*___ (Parisian's purpose)
- 27 European capital
- 29 Lacto-___ vegetarian (will eat eggs or dairy)

Upcoming HMBC Programs

Date and Time: Monday, June 5, 2023, 6:30 – 8:00pm

Location: Five Rivers EEC, Delmar

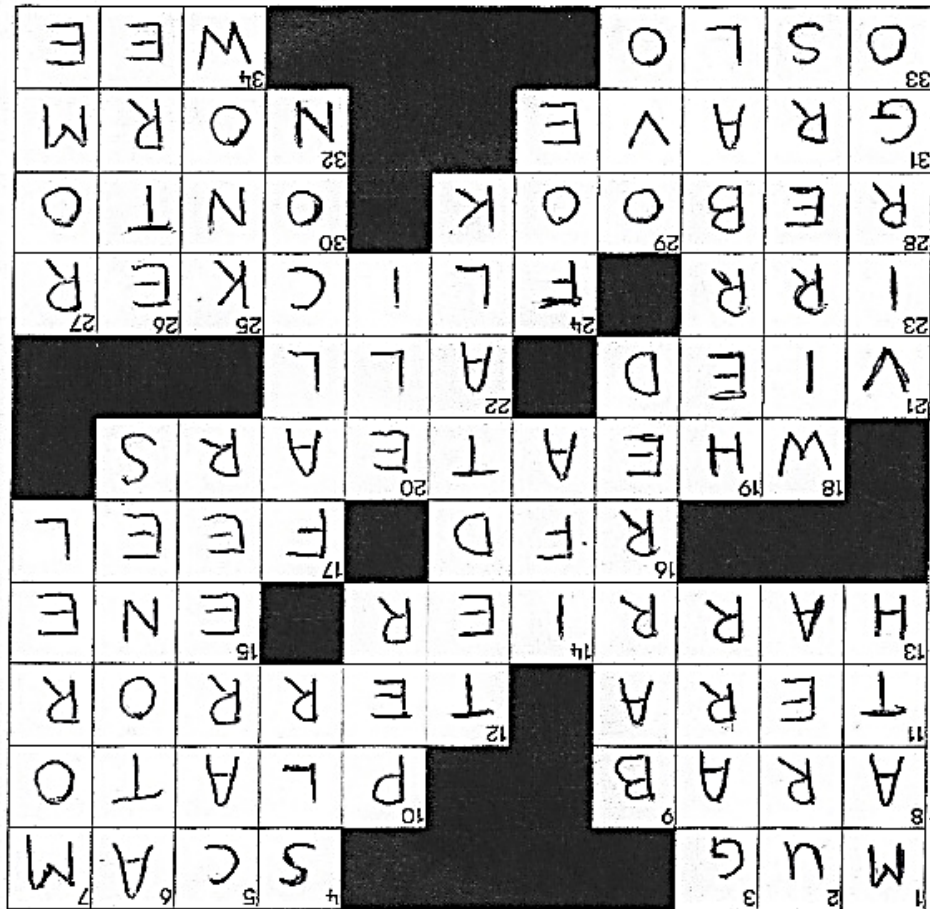
Topic: Birding Northern India

Speaker: Gregg Recer

The Indian Subcontinent contains an extreme array of habitats that range from tropical islands and wet forest, to deserts and seasonal monsoon forests, all the way to the highest glacier-covered mountains on Earth. This program will present a photo travel-log of a 3-week birding tour getting a sampling of some of these in Northern India including the dry plains of Rajasthan in the west, wetlands around Delhi, Bharatpur and Agra, and the foothills of the Himalayas in the east; and will feature birds, mammals, and cultural sites.

Gregg Recer is a former HMBC president. He and his wife, Cathy Graichen, have been HMBC members since 1989 and have been focused on world birding for the last 20 years.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE SOLUTION



Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

c/o Five Rivers EEC

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