

Feathers

ABA Grand Alaska Tour: St. Paul Island, Gambell, and Nome

by James J. de Waal Malefyt

This birding trip, May 19-29, 2018, in western Alaska was organized by the American Birding Association (ABA) and led by High Lonesome Bird Tours. The objectives were western native Alaskan birds on the Pribilof Island of St. Paul, in Gambell on St. Lawrence Island, and in Nome as well as vagrant Asian species. I left May 19th from Albany for Anchorage and arrived about 1 pm after gaining 4 hours in the time-zone shift and a lot more northern daylight. Our birding group of 18 people from the US met over a fresh Salmon dinner at the Coast International Inn. Here we introduced each other and met Jeff Peterson, president of the ABA and Forrest Davis, owner of High Lonesome. After dinner we drove in three vans to Westchester Lagoon where Artic Terns and Red-necked Grebes were nesting.

The next day we took all our needed field gear and clothes to the Anchorage Airport and waited for Pen Air to fly us to St. Paul via Dellingham for refueling. However, at Dellingham we had to wait an hour until the cloud ceiling at St. Paul had lifted for a safe visual landing. It was late afternoon when we landed, but after getting our luggage into our dormitory-type rooms, we headed out to Weather Station Pond where a few Red-legged Kittiwakes were bathing with a flock of Black-legged Kittiwakes. Our tour guide, Stephen Lorenz, soon yelled "Pochard" near some Scaup. This was our first Asian bird and a life bird for me. It is similar to our Redhead Duck. A Long-tailed Jaeger also passed over the pond, a second life-bird. At a nearby lake we spotted four uncommon Snow Geese and a darker bird with them which after much scoping and guidebook examination was determined to be another Asian species - a rare Tundra Bean-Goose. After a van ride on gravel roads to Webster Lake we spotted a Tufted Duck, many Red-necked Phalaropes, and assorted waterfowl – Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintails, and Long-tailed Ducks. Gray-headed Rosy Finches and the ever present Lapland Longspurs circled around us in the uplands. Around 8:30 pm we stopped at a tidal bay, and after spotting many Rock Sandpipers and several shorebirds, like Bar-tailed Godwits, one of our leaders scoped an unusual shorebird – an Asian Terek Sandpiper.

(Continued Page 105)

Inside This Issue...

ABA Grand Alaska Tour.....	101
President's Corner.....	102
HMBC Birding Guide.....	103
Amy's Park Site Description.....	104
Field Trip Reports.....	107
Washington County Grasslands Land Acquisition (DEC Press Release).....	110
Upcoming HMBC Programs	112
Upcoming ASCR Programs.....	113
Writers' Page.....	114
Artists' Page.....	115
On Nature.....	116
Upcoming Field Trips.....	118

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

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There is no President's Corner report 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

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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

AMY'S PARK SITE REPORT

by Tom Williams

This Lake George Land Conservancy property, located about 6 miles north of Bolton Landing, includes the headwaters for Indian Brook and contains important wildlife habitat within its large, unfragmented forest and wetland complexes. LGLC has created four hiking trails for passive recreation, exploration and education, which include lookout areas to view an active beaver pond and its resident wildlife. It is best birded during the breeding season, from May to mid-July. The following description pertains to that time period, but the area could certainly be explored most of the year. Birders can expect wetland species, and the typical suite of higher-elevation breeders.

The yellow, orange and blue hiking trails start at the Padanarum Rd. parking area; the red trail and north boat launch start from Trout Falls Rd. A new boat launch for the southern pond has been created off of Padanarum Rd.(with its own pull-off for parking), south of the main parking area.

To hike from the main Padanarum Rd. trailhead, follow the orange trail a short distance to a junction with the yellow trail. The orange trail turns right, while the yellow trail continues straight. The orange trail will lead you on a 1.0-mile path with a loop at the end that winds around some rocky ledges and overlooks the northern beaver pond. Birds that could be expected in this forested section would include Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, Hermit Thrush, Magnolia Warbler and Scarlet Tanager. Alder Flycatcher is common at the beaver pond.

The yellow trail leads to a lovely, lichen covered rocky outcrop at the beaver dam (0.5 m) and continues across the stream below the beaver dam for another 0.5 miles to Trout Falls Rd (you will pass the connector trail to Godwin Preserve before the bridge). Additional species along this trail might include Pied-billed Grebe, Broad-winged Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Least Flycatcher and Eastern Kingbird.

The blue trail follows a logging road from the northeast corner of the park to the 0.5-mile-mark on the orange trail. Where the red trail joins the blue trail and swings around the northern end of the park past North Pond, one could encounter Winter Wren, Ovenbird, Nashville Warbler, Northern Parula, Blackburnian Warbler, Canada Warbler and Dark-eyed Junco.

From the Trout Falls Rd. parking lot, the red trail climbs steadily south for 0.75 miles to a lookout point, with great views of Lake George. It can also be accessed from a section of the yellow trail via a steep climb from Trout Falls Rd. Going north from the Trout Falls Rd parking lot, the red trail primarily follows an old logging road for 1.45 miles, for an easy hike around the northern pond to connect with the blue trail.

A complete description of the site, including a trail map and directions, can be found here:

<http://www.lglc.org/preserves/amys-park/>

ABA GRAND ALASKA TOUR *(continued.....)*

Birding the next full day on St. Paul began at Zapadni Point to see the cliff-dwelling seabird colonies of Horned and Tufted Puffins and Least, Crested, and Parakeet Auklets – all new life-birds for me. Both Common and Thick-billed Murres and Red-faced and Pelagic Cormorants nested there too. After lunch at the Trident Seafood cafeteria, we headed inland to a rock quarry where I found a nesting Rock Sandpiper and singing Pacific Wren. Some of the island's beautiful spring flowers were in bloom – Woolly Lousewort and Rock Jasmine, both still covered with tiny drops of melted snow flurries which we had earlier that morning. At lunch we started our daily checklist led by Stephen Lorenz. In the afternoon we birded Hutchinson's Hill and beach where nothing unusual turned up (Snow Buntings, Fox Sparrows, Franklin's Gull). We also passed by the island's Reindeer herd and one of the leaders found the island's endemic Pribilof Shrew.

The next morning, May 22, we visited Reef Rookery where Steller's Sea Lions and Northern Fur Seals were starting to gather on the beaches and nearby rocky islands. After spotting a Pigeon Guillemot, an Asian Brambling was discovered in the rocks. Several Sabine's Gulls and Northern Fulmars were also seen. After lunch and a goodbye to the village of St. Paul with its Russian Orthodox Church, we packed our bags onto a Pen Air prop-plane and flew to Anchorage with our entire group of twenty filling the airplane. St. Paul Island had been good to me – 13 new life birds of which five were Asian species.

The second island we visited was St. Lawrence, south of the Arctic Circle, and looking 45 miles to the west we could see the Chukchi Peninsula of Russia. We stayed in the northern village of Gambell and used ATVs to get to the beaches and inland birding sites. The days started with a cold breakfast at 6:30 a.m. followed by a "beach watch" where thousands of alcid flocks (mostly Parakeet and Least Auklets) were observed flying low over the Bering Sea going from their nesting cliff colonies to forage in the sea. Occasionally we saw Red-throated, Pacific, and Yellow-billed Loons, some small flocks of Emperor Geese, and Pomarine, Parasitic, and Long-tailed Jaegers. Birding inland near newly formed melt-water marshes yielded a rare Red-necked Stint and an Asian Bullfinch. Walks through the ancient "boneyards" of whale and walrus bones produced a rare Asian Common Sandpiper and Lesser Sand-Plover, several Bluethroats, both Eastern Yellow and White Wagtails, and Northern Wheatears. Gambell was also good to me producing 11 new life birds.

After Gambell we flew to Nome on the Alaskan mainland and drove several of the roads out of town each of the remaining trip days. Along Teller Road we encountered Muskox herds and the first of many courting male Willow Ptarmigans. On one hillside we spotted a Rock Ptarmigan – another life bird. The next day we drove south of Nome along the Council Road stopping frequently to examine the shorebirds and waterfowl at Safety Sound and along the lagoons and marshes near the coastline. Staging Brant on the partially iced over waterbodies were everywhere. Flying overhead were an occasional Mew or Sabine's Gull. Arctic Terns were numerous, but now and then the slightly different call and black-bill indicated an Aleutian Tern – another life bird and the final one for me on this bird tour (ABA #689).

The last day in the Nome area we drove the Kougaruk Road to go to the nesting sites of the Bristled-thigh Curlews near milepost 72, but encountered a long stretch of snow drifts at milepost 66 which had not been cleared yet by the highway crews. We were forced to turn back and birded along one of the rivers for Orange-crowned, Blackpoll, and Yellow-rumped warblers and Golden-crowned Sparrows. Overall, we saw 141 bird species on this Alaskan bird tour and 23 new life birds for me, more than I expected, 6 of which were rare Asian birds.

ABA GRAND ALASKA TOUR *(continued.....)*



Horned Puffin



Tufted Puffin



Willow Ptarmigan



Parakeet Auklet

Field Trip Reports

Field Trip Report Peebles Island - August 19, 2018

Ten birders met this morning at Clark St. in Cohoes for the HMBC Cohoes Flats/Peebles Island field trip. Because of the recent rains, the water levels were quite high with no shorebirds in sight on the Flats. We did manage to find a few birds there including Double-crested Cormorants, a few Mallards, Great Blue Herons, Great Black-backed Gulls, Belted Kingfisher, and a Bald Eagle.

We then proceeded to Peebles Island where we spent most of the morning. We found a bird hotspot near the intersection of the Perimeter Trail and the connector from the Deer Run Trail. We found 5 Woodpecker species here -- Pileated, Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, and Northern Flicker, but also many songbirds. The bird of the day in my opinion was a CAPE MAY WARBLER, demonstrating that migration has begun. We also had Black-and-white Warbler, Eastern Bluebird, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Baltimore Oriole, and lots of Cedar Waxwings. A Great Egret and a Turkey Vulture were seen flying over the island. Other songbirds included Fish Crow, Red-eyed and Warbling Vireo. We eventually spotted a Spotted Sandpiper on the other side of Peebles Island from the Flats.

Our final bird count was a modest 40 species. There were also some noteworthy animals including a squirrel which surprisingly fell out of a tree and landed with a thud on the ground just inches from where the group was walking. (The squirrel was fine). We also saw several turtles, many colorful mushrooms, and lots of rushing water along the trail. Thanks to all the congenial birders who participated!

John Hershey, coordinator

Huyck Preserve - September 1, 2018

Nine birders turned out this morning for HMBC's field trip to Huyck Preserve in Rensselaerville (Albany County). Usually shorebirds are present at this time of year, but due to high water in Lake Myosotis, there was no habitat and thus no shorebirds. We did find a few migrant songbirds. Lighting was difficult with a heavy overcast, but of the warblers we saw well enough to identify, at least three were Cape May. There were also a couple of Yellow-rumped Warblers and a Prairie Warbler. Otherwise, we saw Bald Eagles, Great Blue Herons, Common Yellowthroats, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Belted Kingfisher, Common Ravens, and a few other common species. Naomi saw a hummingbird and a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher. Thanks to all who participated.

John Kent
Selkirk

Field Trip Reports *(continued....)*

Albany Pine Bush – September 16, 2018

A large group of approximately 25 birders attended the joint HMBC/Albany Pine Bush Preserve field trip this morning at Karner Barrens East. The decision was made to circuit the yellow perimeter trail in a counter-clockwise direction, due to heavy ground fog conditions at the start of the day. This proved to be a wise choice, as it put the group into the "birdier" portions of the habitat later in the morning, with better visibility and warmer temperatures. Early sightings included APB breeding species such as Prairie Warbler, Field Sparrow, and Eastern Phoebe. An Olive-sided Flycatcher, possibly a continuing bird that has been present since Sept. 7th, was seen on the south leg of the trail, quite a distance from previous sightings. Multiple birds? It was a life bird for several people, who witnessed the bird facing them at first, then saw a profile view while the bird preened.

The area around the landfill had many Turkey Vultures, American Kestrels (4), Northern Flickers, and a Solitary Sandpiper at the stump pond. The only real group of migrants was along the northwestern leg of the trail, where Blackpoll, Bay-breasted, Black-throated Green, and Tennessee Warblers were observed. A larger bird moving stealthily through a white birch cluster turned out to be a Yellow-billed Cuckoo. The cooperative bird remained visible in decent light for diagnostic views and photos.

Thanks to everyone who turned out today, that was a lot of fun! Special thanks to Dillon from the APBP for co-leading the trip, and offering valuable insights into the wildlife, habitat, and history of the Preserve. We hope to see all of you on future trips.

Tom and Colleen Williams
Colonie

Saratoga Spa State Park – September 22, 2018

Thirteen birders met on a perfect fall morning to bird the 'picnic table graveyard' area of Saratoga Spa SP. Starting from the Carlsbad parking area, we ran across our first mixed flock just before the wood and brush dump, spotting Black-and-white, Chestnut-sided, Black-throated Green, numerous Magnolias, and several "Baypolls". In addition we had both Phoebes and Pewees, a drab Scarlet Tanager, and a flyover Osprey.

Moving down the mulch piles across from the landfill, we hit the sparrow bonanza with Song, White-throated, Chipping and a Lincoln's Sparrow. We had inconclusive looks at a possible Clay-colored Sparrow but did not get a photo. A female-type Indigo Bunting lurked in the scrub too.

Other birds seen were Northern Harrier, Broad-winged and Sharp-shinned Hawk, the Woodpecker six-pack, and actual identifiable Blackpoll and Bay-breasted Warblers. We totaled 45 species plus three that couldn't be nailed down. Thanks to all who came and lent their sharp eyes and ears!

Naomi Lloyd
West Sand Lake

Nutten Hook, September 29, 2018

The fog was dense as I made my way to Nutten Hook for the joint Alan Devoe/Hudson Mohawk field tip on Saturday, September 29th but while I waited in the parking lot for the group to gather it lifted and left us with a gorgeous blue sky and crisp fall weather. A small but enthusiastic band of birders started at the river, where we viewed a distant adult Bald Eagle, heard a Belted Kingfisher, and watched a deer swim the river to Greene County. From there we explored a new trail through the woods to the north that emerged on the river near an inlet and a sheltered cove. On this wooded trail we encountered a number of warblers, including Magnolia, Black-throated Green, and Common Yellowthroat, which seemed to be feeding on Virginia Creeper. We also got good looks at a couple of Blue-headed Vireos. We watched first of the season White-throated Sparrows feeding in the trail with Song Sparrows and a single female or immature Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Because the loop trail to Ferry Road along the river was blocked by a fallen tree, we took the trail along the marsh to the Hooke where we flushed a single Great Egret. This south end of the site also produced Swamp Sparrows, Brown Creeper, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and a couple of Eastern Phoebes. Naomi spotted a migrating Osprey high in the sky. Blue Jays were present in impressive numbers all morning apparently still migrating through the area. We finished the morning with a respectable 40 species. For anyone interested, a complete list for the trip is available on eBird.

Kathryn Schneider

Good News for Washington County Grasslands!

DEC Press Release

DEC Adds 180 Acres to Washington County Grasslands WMA

\$326,000 Acquisition Increases Size of Protected Grassland Habitat to 466 Acres

New York State has purchased 180 acres of land to add to the Washington County Grasslands Wildlife Management Area (WMA) New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos announced today. The \$326,000 land acquisition, located along Plum Road and County Route 46 in the town of Fort Edward, will increase the amount of important grassland habitat protected by the WMA to 466 acres.

"This acquisition allows the Department of Environmental Conservation to protect and maintain grassland habitat and provide breeding and foraging grounds for grassland birds, many of which are experiencing steep population declines," said DEC Commissioner Seggos. "These lands will also provide additional wildlife viewing, hunting, and other outdoor recreational opportunities."

The WMA is home to more than 100 bird and animal species, including wintering snowy owls and state endangered short-eared owls. The area also provides critical habitat to 10 of the 11 grassland bird "species of greatest conservation need," including Northern harriers, upland sandpipers, Eastern meadowlarks, horned larks, and American kestrels. The WMA is part of the 13,000-acre Washington County Grasslands Important Bird Area (IBA) in the towns of Fort Edward, Argyle, and Kingsbury, in central western Washington County. The IBA contains large open areas which grassland birds require for nesting, roosting, foraging and protection from predators.

The Pulver Family is selling the lands to New York State in memory of the late David Pulver.

"My children and I want to see the land preserved on behalf of my deceased husband, David, as part of our family's legacy to the town and future generations," said Merrilyn Pulver. "This transaction couldn't have happened without the support of Friends of the IBA. They are as committed to helping people and local communities as they are to the birds, and we are fortunate to have them here."

Friends of the IBA (FIBA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit land trust dedicated to conserving critical habitat across New York State for endangered and threatened grassland birds. The organization provided vital assistance on this project and facilitated communications between DEC, the Pulvers, and the Town of Fort Edward.

"Washington County is doubly fortunate to not only have one of the few intact grassland habitats in the northeast but also to have it in an area accessible to people from all over the country who readily see and appreciate the diversity of species found there," said Robert Henke, Chairman of the Washington County Board of Supervisors. "We are grateful to the Pulver family for protecting this important tract in the grasslands."

"We applaud DEC's commitment to preserving New York's biodiversity," said FIBA founder and Executive Director Laurie LaFond. "We need to conserve critical grassland habitat imperiled birds like short-eared owls and snowy owls will still be around for our children and grandchildren to enjoy."

Grassland birds benefit humans in a variety of ways including controlling insects and rodents that damage crops or carry disease such as Lyme or other diseases. Grasslands are also important habitat for bees and butterflies that pollinate fruits, vegetables, hay, and other crops.

Good News for Washington County Grasslands! *(continued.....)*

DEC plans to construct two parking areas and a half-mile trail, and install directional and educational signage on the Pulver. In addition, an ADA-accessible viewing blind will be constructed on another part of the WMA. The newly acquired lands will be open to hunting during open hunting seasons. Deer, turkeys, and rabbits inhabit the lands. DEC is evaluating stocking pheasants at this location in addition to other locations in the WMA.

DEC is partnering with FIBA to construct a regional Birding Center in the Washington County Grasslands. The center will provide environmental education to local schoolchildren and adults and serve as a destination for bird watching tourism to the region. It will also host research facilities for DEC and FIBA biologists and wildlife managers.

"This grassland has tremendous ecological value, protecting an important habitat. And there's a tourism value as well as this bird habitat attracts more visitors each year," said Senator Betty Little.

Assembly member Carrie Woerner said, "I am pleased that these Important Bird Areas will be protected for generations to come. My thanks to Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Seggos for their leadership on habitat conservation throughout the state and to the Friends of the IBA for their stewardship of this land."

More information, including a map, on the [Washington County Grasslands WMA](#) can be found on DEC's website.



Upcoming HMBC Programs

Leader or Speaker: Gregg Recer

Location of Event: Five Rivers EEC

Date: October 1, 2018 - 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Topic: "Birding the Edges of the Amazon Basin"

The Amazon Basin includes all of the river systems that feed the Amazon itself; an area of nearly 3 million square miles, or about 40% of the entire land area of South America. While the Basin itself is largely covered in various forms of rainforest, the region is surrounded by numerous other habitat types such as foothill and cloud forests as one moves up into the Andes, seasonally flooded savannas of the Pantanal and Llanos to the south and north, and drier cerrado on the Brazilian Plateau. This program will provide a sampling of birding travels in some of these areas on the edge of the Amazon in Ecuador and Brazil, highlighting the remarkable diversity of landbirds, hummingbirds, parrots, and waders, as well as other wildlife including jaguar.

Leader or Speaker: Kevin McGrath/Ian Campbell

Location of Event: The Chazen Company, Troy

Date: October 17, 2018 - 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Topic: Informational Meeting on Ecuador Trip

For all those who missed last month's Feathers (and those who needed a bit of extra prodding), on Wednesday October 17, Mr. Ian Campbell of *Tropical Birding Tours* (<http://www.tropicalbirding.com/>) will provide a special

program for HMBC members and guests to present the proposed itinerary for the January 9th to 19th 2020 field trip to Ecuador. This 10-day trip is open to all members and friends, with a limit of 16, on a first come basis.



Ian will present the itinerary, costs, and short list and photos with of some of amazing probable species we are likely to see on each day of the trip.

This program will be held at The Chazen Company offices on first floor of the Flannigan Square Building located at 547 River Street, Troy.

The building is immediately north of the Hoosick Street Bridge on the west side (river side) of River Street. Parking on the north side of the building is accessible from either Hutton Street or River Street. The rear entrance to the parking lot will be open.

If you cannot make the program, but are interested in the trip, you may contact me directly at kmcgrath@chazencompanies.com or kmcgrath@nycap.rr.com or keep an eye for announcements in Feathers and on the club website.



Leader or Speaker: Jeff Schoonmaker

Location of Event: Five Rivers EEC

Date: November 5, 2018 - 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Topic: "Arizona and More"

Jeff Schoonmaker, professor of physics at Hudson Valley Community College and a first-time presenter, will take us on a tour of Southeast Arizona to visit the wonderful desert and canyon birds of that region. Using photos from his most recent visit in late March of this year, along with some from past visits, Jeff will cover a wide variety of both year-round resident birds and some which are migratory. In addition, he promises some surprises, including a few photos and scenes from Alaska and a couple of quiz birds. Bring your sharpest ID skills for that part!

Leader or Speaker: Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

Location of Event: Five Rivers EEC

Date: December 3, 2018 - 7:00pm - 8:30pm

Topic: "Year of the Bird"

Commemorating the centennial of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, conservation organizations have designated 2018 as the Year of the Bird, a celebration of birds and the ways this Act has helped their conservation, and a recognition of new threats to bird populations in modern times.

We at Naturelogues have prepared this special program to celebrate the Year of the Bird with our personal look at birds both across our nation and across time. While showcasing avian beauty, behavior, and diversity, we weave in successes, failures, and changes over the past hundred years. From plume hunters and pesticides to the recovery of the Bald Eagle, we look at species and habitats lost and protected; birds whose range has changed in our lifetimes, and special conservation issues we have come across in our extensive travels across the US.

Please join us as we ponder and celebrate the Year of the Bird!

Denise and Scott have presented many slide programs about the beauty and breadth of the natural history they have experienced while birding and photographing both here in the Capital Region and across North America. You can see some of their work at www.naturelogues.com or at [www.facebook/naturelogues](https://www.facebook.com/naturelogues).

UPCOMING ASCR PROGRAMS

No ASCR programs to announce at this time

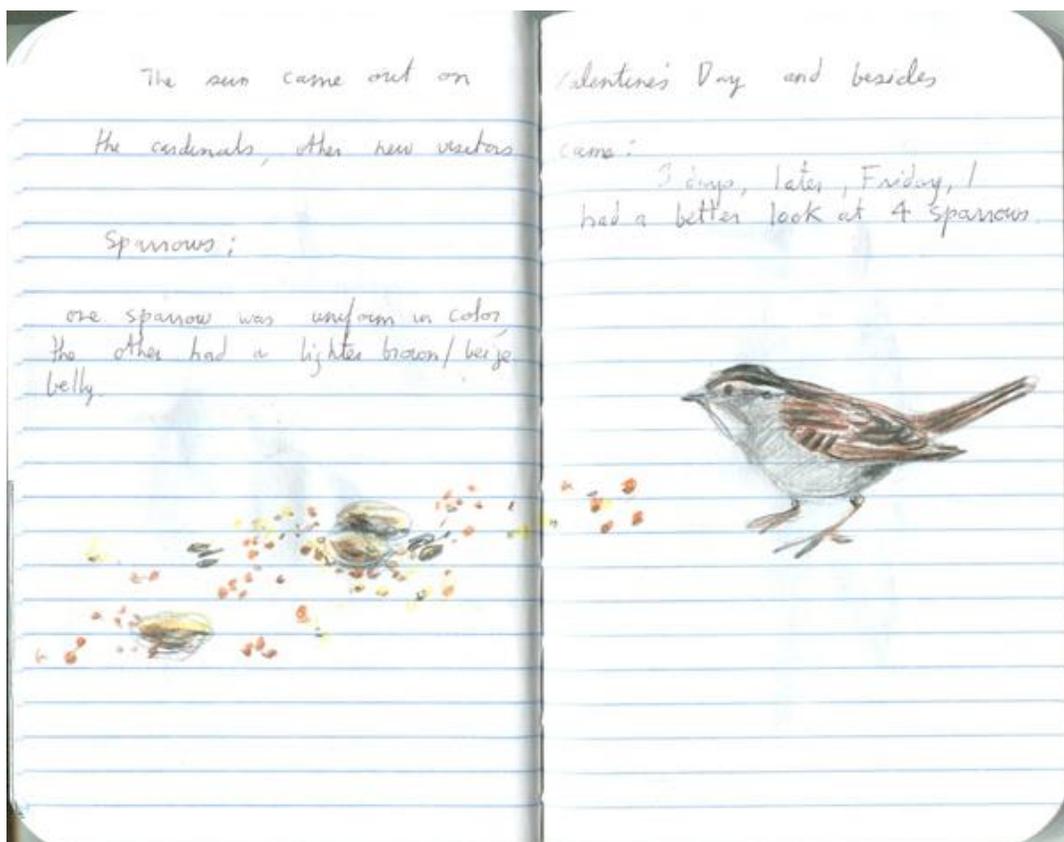
WRITERS' PAGE

Poem for Mary Ann

"Carolina Blue Moon Cottage"

by Marilyn Hamecher

Relaxing in a Blue wooden chair on the deck.
Staring at the Blue Ocean, close but not too close.
Laughing Gulls, laughing, from the Blue sky above.
Blue Grass music floating through the night air.
Watching the Sun rise up from edge the Blue Sea.
Gazing at the ancient stars and a full Blue Moon.
Feasting on the Atlantic Blue Crab.
Listening to the Peepers in the Blue of the night.
All of this... at the Carolina Blue Moon Cottage.

ARTISTS' PAGE**House Sparrow**
Dagmar Frinta

Thank you to Sally Eckhoff for her amazing animation, which you can view below:

<https://vimeo.com/289537059>

ON NATURE

Leaf: A Life History

By Denise Hackert-Stoner

Looking back, I guess my first days were uneventful. In fact, I can honestly say that in my early life absolutely nothing happened. But more about that later. For now, let's focus on the riotous colors, the eye-popping grandeur that is me. I have worked like hell to achieve this, believe me. All spring and summer long I worked nonstop. I was a small, self-contained factory, along with my many siblings, on the tree we sustained. On the tree that sustained us. On the tree that we were a part of. There. That's right, the tree that we were a part of. Our trunk delivered soil nutrients, chlorophyll, and water from the moment we woke from the great and empty void of winter, from the time we emerged from our hard and scaly dormant winter bud. And we, each on our own, but all together, used those ingredients, mixed them with carbon dioxide, oxygen, and hydrogen, to make sugar; lots and lots of sugar, to keep our tree, ourselves, alive. And we sang in a chorus of green, green life all summer long. We worked, we sang, we danced on the evening breezes, as we made our food from the elements.



I can see, you know. My light sensors are not very different from yours. My siblings and I see red and blue light, and UVB light, too. That's how we sense day length. And the lengthening days of spring and the long days of summer mean work, work, work. The long days are ours, and we are theirs. Work is life, after all, and life is work.

Around mid-summer our light sensors begin to notice the gradual lengthening of the night. Despite the intense heat, the days are shortening. We sense that. Our trunk stops sending us chlorophyll. No more green. No more work. No more making sugar. Instead, our trunk sends a new substance: a stress hormone called abscisic acid (ABA). At the same time I produce anthocyanin, a sort of sunscreen, red in color, which will protect me from drying out in the intense summer heat.

The ABA causes a cork scab to form at the base of my stem, cutting me off from any food or water from my trunk. I can still make some sugar from the chlorophyll I have stored up, but after that I can rest. I am through. As the last of the green chlorophyll leaves me, the tannins and carotenes that I have harbored in my cells and which have helped me take in sunlight all summer, now show through my otherwise colorless self in browns and yellows. Those anthocyanins that protected me from the summer sun now show up in bright reds, and sometimes combine with my carotenes as shades of orange. I am a fluttering, waving, dancing flame of color. And altogether, my siblings and I are the most popular members of the fall chorus. People come from miles around just to see us. We are a spectacle. And we will remain so until our stems become so brittle from lack of water that they break off from our branches and we fall to cover the earth in gold and red.

On Nature (continued)



Our trunk, our roots, the parts of ourselves we have left behind, are through too, at least for the season. But since their end is temporary, and since they will need to continue to grow and thrive, and survive the coming winter, they are undergoing changes as well, though not as obvious as mine. ABA signals the tree to stop growing the new twigs that have been growing so quickly all summer and instead to begin to grow tiny dormant buds. These buds contain stem cells that will become new twigs and leaves next spring. The ABA causes the production of a substance called callose, which prevents these cells from dividing. So during the cold winter all of these hard little buds will remain just that. The tree will not be able to open its dormant buds as long as the these little cells cannot divide. And the callose can only be broken down by a long stretch of cold weather. Once the required minimum of cold days is reached (usually sometime in January) the callose will break down. Then a stretch of warm weather will signal the tree to open those buds and the new spring leaves will emerge. It's a pretty amazing little puzzle, each piece fitting perfectly into the next, ensuring the life of a forest.



With their precious buds safe, the trunk and branches of the tree will shed most of their water. Their starches will be converted to a sugary antifreeze. And they will remain completely dormant for the darkest part of the winter. Absolutely nothing will happen within the tree or its buds. Absolutely nothing.



Upcoming Field Trips.

October

Sunday, October 14, FIVE RIVERS EEC (Albany County; morning)

Coordinator: John Kent 518-424-2234 jwkent@fastmail.fm

We'll walk about 2 miles over generally flat terrain with some small hills, passing through a variety of habitats. Migrating sparrows are often abundant at this time of the year, with a good chance of Lincoln's and White-crowned as well as more common species. Both species of kinglet may be present, as well as Yellow-rumped Warbler, Palm Warbler and Blue-headed Vireo. A late Nashville, Black-throated Green, Blackpoll or Magnolia Warbler might be found. Wood Duck and other waterfowl are possible, as well as Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks and Merlin. Wet grass and muddy spots may be encountered, so waterproof footwear is recommended.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. in the parking lot at Five Rivers EEC in Delmar. Note new parking arrangement and follow signs.

.Saturday, October 27, COLLINS LAKE (Schenectady County; morning)

Coordinator: Bill Lee 518-374-3426 bilee@hotmail.com

We will visit Collins Lake to view late migrating waterfowl from the beach and the east side of the lake. We will also take a walk east along the north side of the Mohawk River for fall sparrows. Fox Sparrows have been seen in previous years. Foliage will be off the trees to make finding LBJs (Little Brown Jobs) a bit easier.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. near the western end of the Gateway Bridge at Jumpin' Jacks in Scotia. Bring a scope if you have one.

November

Saturday, November 3, TOMHANNOCK RESERVOIR (Rensselaer County; morning)

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

Join us for a morning trip around the Tomhannock Reservoir. We hope to find a variety of waterfowl as resident and migrant passerines and possibly shorebirds. Rarities have turned up at the Tomhannock in the fall and we often find Bald Eagles.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking area at the intersection of Lake Shore Dr. and NY Route 7 at the west end of the causeway. Bring a scope if you have one.

Sunday, November 11, VISCHER FERRY NATURE AND HISTORICAL PRESERVE (Saratoga County; morning)

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

On this trip we'll be looking for migrant waterfowl and winter residents. Rusty Blackbirds are often observed at this time of year. We will start at the main entrance to the Preserve. We will also explore some of the lesser known areas of the Preserve, such as Ferry Drive and the area around the Vischer Ferry Power Plant where Bald Eagles and migrant waterfowl are often seen. The new hike/bike trail from the Clamsteam Tavern location to Ferry Dr. is completed, and this will open new areas to the east of the Whipple Bridge. The leader may choose to go in this direction.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the VFNHP main entrance, at the intersection of Riverview and Van Vranken Rds. in Clifton Park.

UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS..... (continued)

December

Christmas Bird Counts

Saturday, December 15, SCHENECTADY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 5:00am - 6:00pm

Coordinator/Compiler: Larry Alden 518-861-6087 overlook@nycap.rr.com

Saturday, December 22, SOUTHERN RENNELAER CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

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

Saturday, December 29, TROY CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Larry Alden 518-861-6087 overlook@nycap.rr.com

Thursday, December 20th SARATOGA SPRINGS CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

Coordinator/Compiler: Jean Holcomb jeanH46@icloud.com Good territory available. Owl-ers needed

Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

c/o Five Rivers EEC

56 Game Farm Road

Delmar, NY 12054