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Feathers

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

Century Run 75th Year Commemoration By Larry Alden

(This is a continuation of Larry's fine work summarizing HMBC's 75-year long tradition of the Guy Bartlett Century Run, ed.)

Southern Invasion of the Century Run

On the first Century Run in 1946 (not called a "Century Run" until the following year), things were different than they are now. A number of what are now common species were considered "southern" species and were rare to the count or not on it at all. The reason for this invasion is assuredly climate change, although we didn't know it at the time. Here are some details on these species.

Black Vulture – One of our newest southern invaders. First found in 2009, they have been missed just twice since then, in 2011 and 2013. It looks like Black Vultures are here for good since they are now being reported on local Christmas Bird Counts!

Turkey Vulture – We think of TeeVees as having always been here, but they were first counted in 1950 and didn't really become expected annually until the early 1970s.

Red-bellied Woodpecker – Now abundant and hard to miss, Red-bellies weren't found on the Century Run until 1982. They weren't common until a decade later and it took until 2006 for just about every team to find this species on the Century Run.

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

There is no President's Corner column 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.

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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

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UPCOMING FIELD TRIPS

COVID-19 Response Update, September 25, 2020: The HMBC Board has decided to cancel all club field trips until further notice. One possible exception to this may be the 2020 Christmas Bird Counts (CBCs). Guidance from the National Audubon Society indicates that the decision whether or not to hold each count is up to the individual count compilers, and NAS recommends waiting until after November 15th to make that decision based on the pandemic conditions at that time. Announcement of the status of the three HMBC CBCs will be made after that date. HMBC virtual programs will continue via Zoom until further notice. We will continue to monitor New York State Executive Orders and guidance related to social-distancing requirements. As the details of orders and guidance are revised, we will re-evaluate whether or not to hold subsequent events. Please check hmbc.net frequently for any updates.

WRITERS' PAGE

Caveat Calls

By: Marilyn Hamecher – 12/20/19

The Chickadee's warning "seet" call wafts through the forest. Alerting other birds, she has spotted an unwanted tourist.

A loud Chic-a-dee call is well known as a mobbing call con. It attracts other birds to harass the predator until he is gone.

Even Red Squirrels recognize the Chickadee's mobbing stunt. Joining in like copy cats, acoustically thwarting a Raptors hunt.

"Seet" warnings move across a landscape at record speed. Waves of silence occur; birds shut up, listen and take heed.

Caveat calls move rapidly without using a charted course. They move from bird to bird, up to a 1/2 mile from the source.

"Seets" travel at speeds of up to 100 MPH, ahead of a Raptor. Signaling to all birds, take cover to escape a hungry Birdnapper.

Their calls are heard throughout the forest and over the tree tops. When a Hawk is soaring above, songbirds morph into Raptor Cops.

Birds hear calls as slowed down tones and prepare for the stalk. "Seet" warnings give some clues as to size and speed of a Hawk.

Songbirds broadcast on air waves their predators cannot hear. Birds foraging on the ground are warned, danger is very near.

Hawks and Owls are not aware of their high frequency alarm. Flying Predators are deaf to high notes; it is part of their charm.

Other mammal species, even fish, eavesdrop and pay attention. Recognizing Raptors are on the hunt, they make the connection.

Now, every bird and animal is warned there could be a calamity. They seek a hiding place, deep in the woods, ducking a tragedy.

We know not all birds or other species will escape this demise. Survival is Nature's way, which we have all come to realize

ARTIST'S PAGE

Green Heron
By Scott Stoner



ON NATURE

The Virtue of Doing Nothing

By Denise Hackert-Stoner

Sometimes it's great to do nothing at all. Late this summer we visited Cohoes Flats, a favorite spot on the Mohawk River just a mile or so beyond the Falls. The River was very dry below the power plant dam and there were small pools of ponded water scattered about among the rocks. These pools were just full of crayfish and minnows, giving the herons and egrets abundant dining options. So I found a comfortable spot on a rock not too far from a Great Blue Heron and just sat there for an hour or so. I was close enough that the heron filled my frame. It did not move for quite a few minutes. Neither did I. It gazed at me. I gazed back. Finally I pulled up my camera, slowly. The heron was not spooked while I snapped away.



It soon began its patient heron hunting technique, although I suspect it didn't take much heron skill to pick up as many crayfish as it could possibly eat.



ON NATURE *(continued)*

Getting the crayfish down the hatch was a different matter, and it took the heron quite a few attempts at getting it lined up just right to be able to swallow it.



This process went on for a good while, with the heron catching, dropping, re-catching, and finally swallowing quite a few of these little crustaceans. After forty minutes or so the heron was joined by a Great Egret.



ON NATURE *(continued)*

The egret was shy at first, more of the heron than of me. It was, after all, horning in on the heron's lunch spot. But after sitting awhile and just watching the heron, the egret finally unfurled that long, snake-like neck, and picked up a minnow.



I must say the egret's choice seemed to me much easier to swallow than the hard-shelled crayfish!



After over an hour of just sitting, really not doing anything, just observing and photographing two relatively common birds, I left them to their lunch, their river, where I was honored to visit for a short time.

Century Run *(continued)*

Fish Crow – Fish Crows have made inroads into the region from the South via the Hudson River. First reported in 1958 then not again until 1979. Found nearly every year after 1983.

Tufted Titmouse – First reported in 1962 and found every year after that.

Carolina Wren – Carolina Wrens were well known for making northerly incursions after surviving milder winters then getting knocked back during harsher ones. The first Carolina Wrens were reported on the Century Run in 1955 and 1956. After another in 1960, they weren't reported until 1971, 1972, and 1975. Then they showed up again in 1984 with on years and off years to follow. They have been found every year since 2010 and appear to be here to stay.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher – Reported from Schenectady's Central Park in the second Century Run in 1947 as probably the first ever area sighting. Gnatcatchers weren't reported again on the count until 1960. They have been sighted annually since 1973.

Northern Mockingbird – First reported on the 1956 count then not again until 1966, after which they have been seen every year.

House Finch – Although House Finches are a western species, they were originally thought to have established hold in the East when caged birds were released on Long Island, which is, technically, south of the Capital District! This species was first reported in 1967. After a three-year absence, they have been recorded every year since 1971.

Hooded Warbler – First found in 1948 but not again until 1999! Hooded Warblers are becoming more common since then, having been found on twelve of the last twenty years.

Northern Cardinal – Cardinals were first reported in 1950 then not again until 1955. They have been found every year since then.

What can we expect next? Certain southern species have been reported sporadically on the count but some of those were one-hit wonders. Will these species become more than that? Keep your eyes open. Maybe some of these southern (relative to our area) species will repeat in the future: Chuck-will's-widow (1 count), Laughing Gull (3), Snowy Egret (2), Little Blue Heron (1), Cattle Egret (1), Glossy Ibis (2), Acadian Flycatcher (3), White-eyed Vireo (4), Prothonotary Warbler (1), Kentucky Warbler (1), and Yellow-throated Warbler (1). *(Note: Chuck-will's Widow, Acadian Flycatcher, and Prothonotary Warbler were reported locally this spring, after I included them in this group!)*

Why stop there? Keep your eyes and ears peeled for Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Black-necked Stilt, Eurasian Collared Dove, Blue Grosbeak, Boat-tailed Grackle, and Summer Tanager. *(Note: A Blue Grosbeak was also reported, with photo, from the HMBC area this spring!)* Hey, you never know.

Century Run 75'th Year Commemoration, Larry Alden

(continued)

Miscellaneous Century Run Facts and Figures

The first century run was held on May 12, 1946. A group of five birders went out with the goal of finding 100 or more species. They found 105.

The reporter, G. Malcolm Andrews, noted that local birders did century runs in 1932, 1933, and 1934, before the founding of the HMBC, but these were done with observers covering discrete locations to test if they could find a cumulative 100 species in the area. Andrews considered this the first "official" Century Run since it was done by a single field party that stayed together for all the species.

Ironically, "official Century Runs" now include results of all the groups out on count day, and the "official" count for 1946 includes results from a club field trip that same day with seven participants that added three additional species not reported by the first group. Two more species seen by individuals in their yards were also counted in the total. After that first century run in 1946, HMBC has had a Century Run every year since.

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- Participants in the 1946 century run: G. Malcolm Andrews, Guy Bartlett, Alice Holmes, Minnie B. Scotland, Nelle G. Van Vorst
- Year the "century run" became the "Century Run": 1947
- Year that the "Century Run" became the "Guy Bartlett Century Run": 1978
- Greatest number of groups taking part: 14 (1948 and 2020)
- Fewest number of groups taking part: 2 (1946), 3 (2010)
- Seventy-five-year average number of groups participating: 8
- Most total participants: 55 (1948)
- Fewest total participants: 8 (2008)
- Seventy-five-year average number of participants: 28
- Most species reported in a single year: 188 (1986)
- Fewest species reported in a single year: 110 (1946)
- Seventy-five-year average of species reported in a single year: 154
- Cumulative number of species reported: 255 plus 3 hybrids
- Number of species reported on all 75 counts: 58
- Most species reported by a single group: 156 (1986)
- Seventy-five-year average of most species reported by a single group: 121
- Earliest date held: May 5 (1956)
- Latest date held: May 22 (1999 and 2010)
- Nastiest Century Run: May 18, 2002. This category is subjective, but 2.2 inches of snow at the Albany Airport with greater amounts at higher elevations made for a disastrous Century Run. The total of 133 species found was the lowest since the 1963 count, when 126 species were found.

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Century Run

(continued)

Century Run Compilers:

G. Malcolm Andrews – 1946-1947, 1954-1955

Margaret A. Smith – 1948

Guy Bartlett – 1949, 1962-1964, 1967-1970

Minnie B. Scotland – 1950

Nelle G. Van Vorst – 1951

Frazer R. Turrentine – 1952

Gustave Angst – 1956

Walter Kaskan – 1957=1958

Robert P. Yunick – 1959-1961, 1971-2015

Donald J. Tucker – 1965-1966

Larry Alden – 2016-present

* 1953 write-up was not attributed to a particular author

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Last 21 New Species Added to the Count

1. Chuck-will's-widow (2018)
2. Clay-colored Sparrow (2017)
3. Black Vulture (2009)
4. Northern Shoveler (1996)
5. Tundra Swan (1995)
6. Laughing Gull (1991)
7. Snow Goose (1990)
8. Franklin's Gull (1990)
9. White-winged Crossbill (1990)
10. Kentucky Warbler (1988)
11. Lesser Black-backed Gull (1987)
12. Caspian Tern (1986)
13. Common Raven (1986)
14. Yellow-throated Warbler (1986)
15. Snowy Egret (1983)
16. Red-bellied Woodpecker (1982)
17. Little Blue Heron (1980)
18. Barn Owl (1979)
19. Iceland Gull (1978)
20. Gadwall (1977)
21. Golden Eagle (1977)

Century Run

(continued)

The Name Game

One thing that strikes me when I look over the old Century Run reports in Feathers is the name changes we've seen over the years. A lot of the changes added an adjective before the name to differentiate it from another non-local species. A whole bunch of these adjectives were "Northern," "American," "Eastern," or "Common." These are downright boring and not even worth mentioning. Others name changes were a bit more interesting. Pheasant became Ring-necked Pheasant. Catbird became Gray Catbird. Starling became European Starling. I'm not talking about these run-of-the-mill changes, either. Old-timers may look back fondly on the Sparrow Hawks and Oldsquaws they've seen over the years. These are the brain-addling changes I'm talking about – the ones that take a couple of years to roll off your tongue. And just when you have it down pat, they go and change it back to what it was earlier. Here are some I noted.

Old Name	New Name
Baldpate	American Wigeon
Oldsquaw	Long-tailed Duck
Holboell's Grebe (quite the tongue-twister!)	Red-necked Grebe
Rock Pigeon	Rock Dove
Rock Dove	Rock Pigeon
Florida Gallinule	Common Gallinule
Common Gallinule	Common Moorhen
Common Moorhen	Common Gallinule
Ringed Plover	Semipalmated Plover
Upland Plover	Upland Sandpiper
Wilson's Snipe	Common Snipe
Common Snipe	Wilson's Snipe
Marsh Hawk	Northern Harrier
Yellow-shafted Flicker	Northern Flicker
Sparrow Hawk	American Kestrel
Duck Hawk	Merlin
Pigeon Hawk	Peregrine Falcon
Crested Flycatcher	Great Crested Flycatcher
Traill's Flycatcher	Alder and Willow Flycatchers
Blue-headed Vireo	Solitary Vireo
Solitary Vireo	Blue-headed Vireo
Prairie Horned Lark (and Northern Horned Lark)	Horned Lark
Long-billed Marsh Wren	Marsh Wren
Short-billed Marsh Wren	Sedge Wren
Olive-backed Thrush	Swainson's Thrush
English Sparrow	House Sparrow
Water Pipit	American Pipit
Slate-colored Junco	Dark-eyed Junco
Red-eyed Towhee	Rufous-sided Towhee
Rufous-sided Towhee	Eastern Towhee
Baltimore Oriole	Northern Oriole
Northern Oriole	Baltimore Oriole
Bronzed Grackle (and Purple Grackle)	Common Grackle
Parula Warbler	Northern Parula
Myrtle Warbler	Yellow-rumped Warbler

Century Run

(continued)

I'm sure I missed some, but you get the idea. And this won't be the last of it, I'm sure. Now that I have the Century Run results in a spreadsheet, I won't need to cull this information from old Feathers again, so I'll surely avoid the Wilson's/Common Snipe swap or the gallinule/moorhen/gallinule confusion. But the "powers that be" like to keep us compilers on our toes and switch up the list order from year to year. Thank goodness for computers. Think of all the erasers they have saved!

Atlas Corner: The Breeding Calendar

By Julie Hart, NY BBA III Project Coordinator

Now that the first year of the Atlas is winding down, it's a good time to reflect on the breeding calendar. As we cycle through the seasons each year, so changes the breeding calendar. Some birds nest in the cold, dark winter, while others await the last hot rays of summer. Hopefully your foray into atlasing has helped tune you into the seasonal changes that birds use to tell them when it's time to start nesting. Journey through a year of atlasing.

Great Horned Owls are our earliest reliable nester, starting courtship duets as early as November and beginning nesting January. In the first few months of the year, other large raptors like Bald Eagles and Common Ravens initiate nesting, followed by the smaller corvids and owls. Urban that can nest near warm heating vents and other artificially locales also start nesting while there is still snow on the ground, birds such as House Sparrows, European Starlings, Rock Pigeons.



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Most of our forest residents, like chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, and some of the woodpeckers, start nesting in April and can survive early cold snaps by holing up in their cavity nests. At the same time, our forests and fields are enriched by the drumming of Ruffed Grouse, the peenting and twittering aerial displays of American Woodcock, and the whirring of male Spruce Grouse as they perform their flutter-jumps to attract mates.

Things start to heat up in late April and the first part of May, literally. The soil thaws, rivers come to life, and the leaves start unfurling. Some of the larger, hardier waterbirds start nesting as soon as the waters thaw, such as swans, Canada Goose, Mallard, Great Blue Heron, and Sandhill Crane. Coastal areas of Long Island warm up sooner than the rest of the state, and early returning birds take advantage, such as American Oystercatcher and Clapper Rail. Our trusty harbinger of spring, the Red-winged Blackbird, can be heard from every patch of reeds in the state by now.

As spring advances, insects begin to emerge, which means there is more food available to support returning migrants. By mid-May, the migrant hawks, swallows, wrens, sparrows, and flycatchers have returned, and warbler migration hits its peak. By the end of the month, rails, nightjars, and thrushes fill out the avian soundscape. Males arrive first to stake a claim to the best territories so that when females return a week or two later they can quickly scout out a good place to build a nest. They get down to business gathering nesting material right away.

Swamp Sparrows add their metallic trill to the avian soundscape in late April to May. Males arrive first to establish territories and females choose their mate and nest location soon after they arrive a week or two later. Photo by [Ian Davies/Macaulay Library](#).

In the first couple weeks of June there is a lot of bird song filling the air, but it slowly diminishes as they lay eggs and start incubating. This is followed by a lull in the breeding season, kind of a calm before the storm, that breaks in late June and early July. There is a rush of chatter, not of bird song, but of call notes between pairs communicating to each other as they frantically try to find enough food to feed their young. We as atlasers feel this rush, too. It's a glorious time to be out watching bird behaviors. Birds are so busy collecting food to quiet their incessantly begging young, that they pay little notice to us interlopers.

Atlas Corner: The Breeding Calendar *(Continued...)*

And then it's suddenly done. We are left with a feeling of loss as we watch the birds we've gotten to know so well disperse or congregate in large flocks. At the same time, some birds are just getting started! Just as the warblers waited until there were insects to return north, and just as the hawks timed their nesting to coincide with maximum fledgling songbirds to feed their young, other species were waiting for conditions to be right for raising their young. Cedar Waxwings were waiting for bountiful summer fruits while American Goldfinches were waiting for thistle, aster, and sunflower seeds to be available. Red and White-winged Crossbills, if they have dropped down for a visit from Canada, wait to take advantage of soft, fresh cones on the trees. Birds with second and third broods can also be seen feeding young into late summer.

Fall is pretty quiet for atlasers. Birds migrate south, the leaves change color, and mammals get ready to hibernate. But one bird, the Barn Owl, has been known to nest in every month of the year!

Barn Owls are the only nesting species in NY that is known to nest in every month of the year.

Photo by [Ian Davies/Macaulay Library](#).



Before you know it, the days shorten, the first snow falls, and Great Horned Owls delight us with their evening duets and it starts all over again. Now that you have witnessed a full breeding calendar firsthand, you can enjoy atlasing in 2021 with an even deeper appreciation.

Published in *New York Birders*, July 2020, by the New York State Ornithological Association, Inc.

Upcoming HMBC Programs

When: October 5, 2020, 6:30-8:00 PM

Location: Virtual presentation on Zoom

Speaker: Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner

Topic: From Desert Valleys to Islands in the Sky: Birding Southeast Arizona

Summary: Southeastern Arizona, with its deserts, canyons, grasslands, riparian areas, and mountains close to Mexico, has long been a mecca for birders. From common species in the lovely Sonoran desert to hummingbirds, flycatchers, trogons, and passerines whose range just barely enters the USA, the region entices birders in every season. The several "sky island" mountains allow the exploration of desert scrub to coniferous forests in a single day! This slide-illustrated program focuses on the unique birds and key birding destinations in the splendidly scenic beauty of southeast Arizona!

An email will be sent and posted to HM Birds in advance of the program date with the link to view the presentation via Zoom.

When: November 2, 2020, See website for time www.hmhc.net

Location: Virtual presentation on Zoom

Speaker: Angelena Ross of NYSDEC

Topic: *Sprucing-up the Adirondacks: Managing Populations of the Endangered Spruce Grouse in New York's Lowland Boreal Forests*

Speaker: Angelena Ross of NYSDEC

After originally enrolling in the Crane School of Music in 1997, Angelena Ross graduated in 2002 from SUNY Potsdam with a BA in Geology and Biology. She studied spruce grouse habitat relationships in the Adirondacks at a summer job with the SUNY Potsdam Research Foundation beginning in the summer of 2002. She completed her Master's degree in Conservation Biology in 2008 at the SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry. Her Master's research focused on spruce grouse distribution, movements, and habitat selection in the Adirondacks. In 2018, she earned a Ph.D. at Clarkson University in Biology where her work focused again on spruce grouse. Her dissertation consisted of population modeling, assessment of habitat management efforts, and evaluation of translocations of this increasingly rare species in New York. She has been employed at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation since 2006 as an Endangered and Threatened Species Biologist. In this presentation, she will focus a bit on her work on spruce grouse population modeling and habitat management, and provide a more in-depth look at results of the spruce grouse translocation efforts.

An email will be sent and posted to HM Birds in advance of the program date with the link to view the presentation via Zoom.

When: December 7, 2020, Check Club website for time, www.hmhc.net

Location: Virtual presentation on Zoom

Speaker: Kitty Rusch

Topic: Distressed Wildlife

Summary: This program is presented by licensed wildlife rehabilitator and environmental educator Kitty Rusch. Learn about the steps to take if you find an orphan baby rabbit, a fledgling bird or a snapping turtle in the middle of the road and the reasons why these steps are so important in the ultimate reintroduction the animal back into the wild. We will also discuss personal experiences of heartbreaking failures and uplifting success including the antics of messy Marvin the opossum in the basement.

If you are interested in becoming a wildlife rehabilitator, want to hear stories of wild animal rescue or just want to save that baby bird that fell out of the nest, please join us.

An email will be sent and posted to HM Birds in advance of the program date with the link to view the presentation via Zoom.

Feathers

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club

c/o Five Rivers EEC

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