



Cayuga Bird Club

NEWSLETTER

ESTABLISHED 1914

APRIL 2012

EDITORIAL CHANGE FOR CLUB NEWSLETTER

BY ANNE MARIE JOHNSON

As was reported in the March newsletter and mentioned at club meetings, I am stepping down as newsletter editor after the June issue. I have enjoyed editing and assembling the newsletter over the years, but my enthusiasm has waned, and I think it's time for new ideas and fresh energy.

Like many club members, I prefer to read newsletters on paper. However, the majority of club members now opt to receive only a digital copy of the newsletter.

Digital communication is the future, and the time seems right for the club's newsletter to transform from a publication designed for print to a resource designed for the digital age.

I am excited about the new direction for the newsletter, and I am equally excited that Cyndy and Richard Tkachuck have volunteered to take over the editing duties. As their introduction below shows, they bring a wealth of editing and life experiences to the task.

INTRODUCING THE NEW EDITORS: CYNDY AND RICHARD TKACHUCK

Cyndy and Richard Tkachuck will become joint editors of the Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter in the fall of 2012. Cyndy earned a bachelor's degree in English at Cornell University, where she worked for more than 30 years as a staff writer and fund raiser. She also served as managing editor of the university's volunteer newsletter and has written many articles and provided content for brochures, fundraising letters, proposals, and volunteer profiles. In the early 90s, Richard cofounded a small enterprise that created the websites for the Asia Society and US Information Agency, and Cyndy edited all the content that was posted on these sites. Many years ago, Richard was the editor of the California Rare Fruit Growers Association's journal as well as managing editor of the journal *Origins*. Richard received his PhD from UCLA in zoology and has published both scientific and popular articles.

Since their retirement, Cyndy and Richard have traveled throughout the world compiling a volunteer portfolio as field helpers, assisting with research and scientific activities. They spent two months working as guides at an ecolodge in Brazil, three months working on a bird-banding project in the Yucatan Peninsula, one month conducting field observations of loafing gulls on Appledore Island in Maine, and three weeks participating in a migratory bird survey in South Korea.



Cyndy and Richard Tkachuck with a Long-eared Owl in Northeast Turkey, July 2011.

Provided by Cyndy and Richard Tkachuck

In 2011, they assisted with a bird banding program in Northeast Turkey for four weeks, and they did field work on Striated Herons and Green Herons in Panama for two weeks.

Although their interests are sometimes away from the Cayuga Lake Basin, they have an avid interest in local birding opportunities and look forward to promoting birding in their home area. 🐦

WATCHING BIRDS IN THE ITHACA AREA FOR NEARLY 100 YEARS

CAYUGA BIRD CLUB

Officers and Contacts

Linda Orkin, President

wingmagic16@gmail.com • 279-4253

Bob McGuire, Vice President

bmcguire@clarityconnect.com • 339-5260

Susan Danskin, Treasurer

danskin@twcny.rr.com • 277-2622

Suzanne Henderson, Recording Secretary

shender1@twcny.rr.com • 539-6541

Colleen Richards, Corresponding Secretary and

Speaker Dinner Coordinator

clr82@juno.com • 347-4293

Laura Stenzler, Trips and Programs

Committee Chair

lms9@cornell.edu • 539-6893

Anne Marie Johnson, Newsletter

annemariejohnson@frontiernet.net • 539-9942

Paul Anderson, Webmaster

paul@grammatech.com • 257-9459

Carol Felton Schmitt, Publicity

cfschmitt@aol.com • 257-2382

Directors (term expiration dates)

Jane Graves (2012)

jgraves@skidmore.edu • 342-6096

Marie Read (2013)

mpr5@cornell.edu • 539-6608

Laura Stenzler (2014)

lms9@cornell.edu • 539-6893

The Cayuga Bird Club meets on the second Monday of each month, September through June, beginning with refreshments at 7:15 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Johnson Center on Sapsucker Woods Road. All meetings and most field trips are free and open to the public. Membership costs \$15 annually per household, \$10 for students, payable in September. To join, send a check (made out to "Cayuga Bird Club") to Cayuga Bird Club Treasurer, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850.

Bird club members receive the Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter monthly from September through June. Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information above. Of particular interest are articles about local bird sightings, bird behavior, or birding hot spots, as well as original poetry, art, and photos.

Chickadee illustration in masthead by Karen Confer and duck silhouette by Lena Samsonenko.

Visit the Cayuga Bird Club website at:

WWW.CAYUGABIRDCLUB.ORG

From the President

When this newsletter comes out, perhaps temperatures will be a bit more seasonable, but as I sit here writing, it is night, and it is 63 degrees. Our windows are wide open without a hint of breeze. It is hard to even place myself in the proper season. The time change comes so early now, and this hot daylight seems to stretch itself out before us like a distorted haze.



Is it truly quiet when I am out in the woods; is it silent in the morning? Or is it only that it is way too early for a rousing dawn chorus? Migration is just beginning. I heard an Eastern Phoebe call in the distance the other day when I was out. The American Kestrels are back at Kip's Barn in Sapsucker Woods, and Great Blue Herons and Belted Kingfishers are on local streams. I have a sense of millions of wings rushing towards us, and I feel a dread that they will not find what they need when they get here. High pollen alerts have appeared on the weather page for the past two weeks. Red Maple flowers cover the branches with a vibrant blush. I have to pinch myself to remember that it is mid-March. And even then it does not truly register in my mammal brain. The leaves are springing out of their bud covers on all trees, and it is this new tender growth that caterpillars munch and thrive on. Will the warblers, thrushes, orioles, and catbirds find what they need? The skies are hard blue; white puffy clouds drift slowly between me and powerful rays of the sun. There is no shade, and dust blows off the plowed farm fields.

Next door my neighbor has just had his big old apple tree cut down, having become sick of cleaning up the apples from his yard in the fall. He cut down a large, ancient Cottonwood so the fluff does not collect in his gutters, and he pulled out the hedgerow between our yards that had become unmanageable. All of these perches and shelters taken away from the birds that fly to my feeders. In my yard, where I am trying to grow winterberry and elderberry, yellow birch and gray dogwood, I am finding myself in an unwelcome battle with White-tailed Deer who need to browse. In my attempt to create a working habitat for wildlife, I have fenced in as much as I can with plastic mesh and metal poles. We do not really know how to tread lightly on this earth. The human foot is heavy and unrelenting.

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Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
APRIL 2 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Walter Jetz	From the tropics to the tundra, birds display a seemingly unrivalled diversity of life histories and behaviors. Thanks to the efforts of myriad amateurs and scientists, we have an increasingly solid grasp on birds' geographic distribution worldwide and can start to map out, better understand, and more effectively conserve this fascinating variation. In his presentation, "Putting the Global Diversity of Birds on the Map," Walter Jetz, Associate Professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Yale University, will discuss his research on the multifaceted global diversity of birds and how he and his colleagues attempt to assess threats to that diversity in a rapidly changing world.
APRIL 9 Monday 5:30 P.M.	Speaker Dinner Restaurant to be determined	Join club members and friends at a local restaurant for dinner with the evening's speaker before the club meeting. Contact Colleen Richards at clr82@juno.com or at 347-4293 for the dinner location and to get on the reservation list.
APRIL 9 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Sarah MacLean	Gulls are a familiar icon of frozen lakes and landfills in winter, but what are they up to during the summer months? In her presentation, "Summer of Gulls: Survival, Defense, and Communication in the Colony," Sarah MacLean will offer a unique glimpse into life at a gull breeding colony by sharing the eight-week saga of a gull chick, from hatching to first flight. She also will present her own research on auditory threat recognition and communication in gulls, providing insight into the cognitive aspect of nest defense. See the speaker profile on page 5.
APRIL 15 Sunday 7:00 A.M.– 4:00 P.M.	Field Trip: Cayuga Lake and beyond Leader: John Confer Meet: 7:00 A.M. at the Cornell Dairy Bar <i>or</i> 7:15 A.M. at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Johnson Center	Migration is well underway by the middle of April, so this should be an exciting trip, stopping at many places along the lakeshore and taking in as many habitats as time will allow. This trip will travel to Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, the Mucklands, and possibly further north. Bring food, drink, scopes, binoculars, and appropriate clothes. We will carpool from both the campus Dairy Bar parking lot on Tower Road and the Johnson Center's visitor parking lot on Sapsucker Woods Road, sharing gas expenses as we go. Contact John at confer@ithaca.edu or at 539-6308.
APRIL 16 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: John Rowden	John Rowden, Associate Director of New York City Audubon (NYCA), will present "Citizen Science Monitoring in an Urban Estuary: What Have We Learned in New York City's Jamaica Bay?" Jamaica Bay is an important spawning site for horseshoe crabs and stopover site for migrating shorebirds. In 2009, with the support of the National Park Service, NYCA initiated a citizen science project to monitor horseshoe crabs and migratory shorebirds at several sites in Jamaica Bay during the spring spawning and migratory season. The project seeks to identify important sites and track local population trends. Three years of data have illuminated how important Jamaica Bay is as well as how it may be changing.

Events Calendar continued

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
APRIL 22 Sunday 6 A.M.– 2 P.M.	Young Birders Club Trip to Braddock Bay Leader: Lynn Bergmeyer Meet: lot next to the lodge, near the Hawk Watch	The New York State Young Birders Club is conducting this trip to Braddock Bay Raptor Research and the Kaiser-Manitou Beach (songbird) banding stations, as well other nearby locations. The trip is open to young birders age 10–19. Registration is required by April 6. See page 5 for more information.
APRIL 23 Monday	Newsletter deadline	Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
APRIL 23 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Leo Douglas	Leo Douglas, Adjunct Lecturer in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology at Columbia University, will present “Flagship or Battleship? Unintended Consequences of the Use of an Amazona Parrot as a Conservation Flagship in the Caribbean.” Flagship species are important components of conservation efforts, engaging public support for species and habitat protection. Using empirical evidence collected on the island of Dominica, Leo will show that the development of a successful flagship species may marginalize other closely related species within local culture, which may be particularly important when there are human-wildlife conflicts.
APRIL 30 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Jessica Meir	Birds are capable of extraordinary and diverse feats, from plunging to the depths of frigid Antarctic waters to flying high in the oxygen-thin air above the tallest mountains in the world. Jessica Meir, a Comparative Physiologist at the University of British Columbia, researched the diversity and breadth of such incredible behaviors, particularly the physiology of these fascinating birds. During Jessica Meir’s presentation, “Deep Divers and High Fliers: The Physiology of Birds at the Extreme,” you will dive with Emperor Penguins and fly alongside Bar-headed Geese. Come enjoy the ride!
MAY 12 Saturday 10:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.	Migration Celebration Johnson Center and Sapsucker Woods	Come celebrate the return of the songbirds. Family-friendly events include guided bird walks, interactive exhibits, live birds, games, and hands-on activities for children. Learn more about bird research and citizen-science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and find out how to create bird-friendly habitat in your own yard. Admission is free.
MAY 14 Monday 5:30 P.M.	Speaker Dinner Restaurant to be determined	Join club members and friends at a local restaurant for dinner with the evening’s speaker before the club meeting. Contact Colleen Richards at clr82@juno.com or at 347-4293 for the dinner location and to get on the reservation list.
MAY 14 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: John Cancalosi	The Sonoran Desert offers the eye a visual feast, presenting a wealth of subjects to photograph. In his presentation, “Thornbirds and other Cactus Critters of the Sonoran Desert,” educator, wildlife photographer, and nature writer John Cancalosi will share images and adventures from the Sonoran Desert. Some of John’s experiences were mundane, while others were full of action and danger, like spending days and nights atop twenty-foot towers deep in the desert, weathering lightning storms and mini desert tornadoes called dust devils.

April Speaker Profile: Sarah MacLean

Sarah MacLean, a junior at Cornell University majoring in natural resources, has been involved in research at the Lab of Ornithology since the beginning of her freshman year. She is a proud alumna of the Shoals Marine Lab on Appledore Island, Maine, where she first fell in love with studying seabirds. Sarah was a student of the Shoals summer field ornithology course in 2010, an avian ecology intern for 8 weeks in 2011, and will be returning for her third summer this year to serve as a Teaching Assistant for the field ornithology course and to train the next generation of gull interns. 🐦

Banded Herring Gull with chick on Appledore Island.



Sarah MacLean

Young Birders Club to Visit Braddock Bay

BY LYNN BERGMAYER

The New York State Young Birders Club (NYSYBC) is conducting a field trip to Braddock Bay on April 22 from 6 A.M. to 2 P.M. We plan to visit both Braddock Bay Raptor Research (BBRR) and the Kaiser-Manitou Beach (songbird) banding stations, as well as walk through the nearby Owl Woods in hopes of finding Northern Saw-whet and Long-eared Owls. We will visit the Hawk Watch platform and share the excitement of the spectacular hawk migration along with hawk counter, Luke Tiller, and other observers.

The annual BBRR Birds of Prey Festival is this same weekend (Friday-Sunday), and the NYSYBC group will be able to take in some of the festival exhibits/events. The group also will have an opportunity to visit other nearby areas, like Island Cottage Woods, known for the occasional coveted “fallout,” which can produce an astounding variety of color and bird song.

Braddock Bay is a migration hot spot located on Lake Ontario just west of Rochester. Millions of birds migrate through the area every spring as they head north to their breeding grounds. Spectacular raptor migrations occur each spring when the hawk

counts conducted at Braddock Bay number in the thousands. Last year over 100,000 raptors were tallied from March through May. This area is also a focal point of songbird activity, especially during migration when it is possible to see over 130 species of songbirds.

The field trip will start at 6 A.M. at the lot next to the lodge at Braddock Bay (near the Hawk Watch) and head over to see birds banded as they come off the mist nets. We will either grab something light to eat at the festival or stop at a nearby diner for a hot lunch. The trip will officially end at 2 P.M., but I plan on birding until dusk with anyone who wishes to continue.

Young birders, age 10–19, are invited to attend with their parents. Anyone under age 12 must be transported and accompanied throughout the trip by a parent. Registration is required, and the **registration deadline is April 6**. Please contact me at L_Bergmeyer@frontiernet.net if you have questions and/or wish to sign up. Or visit the NYSYBC website at www.nysyoungbirders.org for further details regarding the Young Birders Club, this field trip, and others field trips for young birders. 🐦



MINUTES: CAYUGA BIRD CLUB MEETING MARCH 12, 2012

BY SUZANNE HENDERSON

Cayuga Bird Club members and guests gathered in the Johnson Center Auditorium at 7:15 P.M. to enjoy friendly conversation; to admire the club's new book, *Birding the Cayuga Lake Basin*; and to study some of the exhibits brought by Howard Evans for the evening's program. In lieu of the usual cookies before the meeting, a beautiful cake was waiting to be cut later, in celebration of the new book.

Lynn Rich and LeeAnn Van Leer signed up to provide refreshments for the April meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- President Linda Orkin had the honor of announcing that *The Cayuga Bird Club Guide to Birding the Cayuga Lake Basin* is now available for purchase. She took a few moments to show off the book and personally recognize members who were instrumental in putting this publication together. Linda credited the book's editor, Bob McGuire, for leading this major project. She also listed the folks who provided crucial contributions: Karen Edelstein (maps), Anne Marie Johnson (design), Marie Read (photo editing), Kevin McGowan (introduction). Then she read the long list of additional volunteers involved in the project. These volunteers provided photos, wrote site descriptions, proofread text, and more. As Linda asked all the volunteers involved in the project to stand, a hearty round of well-deserved applause resounded from the audience.

Linda gave a brief summary of the evolution of this new basin birding book as a response to the frequently requested but long out-of-print *Birding in the Cayuga Lake Basin*, which originally was printed in the 1970's and then updated in 1993. It was edited by Dorothy McIlroy and Charles Smith.

Linda announced that the Wild Birds Unlimited store would reopen after the evening's program to accommodate folks wanting to purchase the book. She also announced that the first evening of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Spring Field Ornithology course will feature an introduction of the book prior to the lecture and that both the book presentation and the lecture are open to the public.

- Next month's bird club meeting will feature Sarah MacLean who will discuss survival, defense, and communication in a colony of nesting gulls. Sarah

is a junior at Cornell and president of the student Campus Bird Club.

- Upcoming field trips were noted. Linda urged everyone to get out and enjoy an exciting bird watching excursion.

OLD BUSINESS

Linda discussed the shift of the club newsletter away from print as of next September. Details and suggestions are still being entertained by the volunteer editors, Richard and Cyndy Tkachuck. The club wants to make every effort to insure that all members have access to a personal copy of every issue. There may be some difficulties for members without internet access, so some work still is required to accommodate everyone.

BASIN LIST

Susan Danskin read the Cayuga Lake Basin bird list and recorded reports of birds identified in the basin the previous week. The unusually warm weather seemed to usher in some early migrants.

EVENING PROGRAM

Linda introduced guest speaker Howard E. Evans, Professor Emeritus of Veterinary and Comparative Medicine at Cornell. Howard described himself as a naturalist and anatomist. His presentation, "The Anatomy of Birds," focused on two major systems in bird anatomy that are truly fascinating and separate birds from other animals: the respiratory system and the reproductive system.

Howard explained how birds do not have a diaphragm and how their sternum is instrumental in raising and lowering the lungs (as a bellows) in breathing. Bird lungs are recessed into the ribs and constructed as a mass of tubes. Hollow bones in birds actually act as interconnecting airways and become part of their respiratory system. Howard provided some handouts to help with his descriptions. Bird reproduction is complicated, especially egg production. Howard's enthusiastic and humorous presentation showed just how awesome a fertilized egg really is, with the ultimate promise of a young bird emerging from within, and ultimately the perpetuation of the reproductive cycle.

The evening concluded with the cutting and sharing of the delicious cake, which was decorated with a reproduction of the cover of *Birding the Cayuga Lake Basin*. 

FIELD TRIP REPORT: SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS, MARCH 3

BY MATTHEW YOUNG

Nine people joined me for this trip to Lime Hollow, Summerhill, Bear Swamp, and Skaneateles Lake. We found lots of Pine Siskins at Summerhill and at almost all stops. We saw three, very cooperative White-winged Crossbills on Lick Street in Summerhill. All of us had great looks at a male American

Kestrel and a Rough-legged Hawk. Horned Larks were singing (and seen) in Sempronius. At the south end of Skaneteales Lake, we watched displaying Buffleheads, Common Mergansers, and Common Goldeneyes. We saw or heard Common Ravens at many stops as well. 🐦

President's Message

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It is true too that so many of us have forgotten even how to notice. I watched last year as people walked under an oak tree with a Baltimore Oriole in his bright orange and black beauty, his throat vibrating the melody that we all can latch on to in one note. And no one even looked up. You don't need to know what it is, but you do need to look. And then you need to care. But I don't need to tell any of you. You all know it deep inside.

What are we confronting? What are all the beautiful creatures of the earth confronting? None of us really knows yet what will come. People keep asking, "What are the birds doing with all of these changes in the weather?" We don't quite know yet. When we do know, will it be too late?

So no, I don't think it's a beautiful day. A beautiful day is when it is the kind of day it is supposed to be, with blankets of snow slowly melting into the ground; a hint of warmth in the air; a few snowbells bravely displaying their white, sepaled throats; and the trill of a Song Sparrow ringing out in deep cold, as a harbinger of what still remains to come.



New Red-tailed Hawk Nestcam

A new nest camera high above a Cornell University athletic field is streaming crystal-clear views of a Red-tailed Hawk nest via the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds website at www.allaboutbirds.org/cornellhawks. The new camera stream puts viewers 80 feet off the ground and right beside the nest, where they can watch the hawks arrive and see them taking turns incubating eggs.

Cam viewers can compare the two parents, both of whom are banded birds. The male has a more golden-tawny face and is slightly smaller than the female, who has been nicknamed "Big Red" for her alma mater.

The nest should be active for at least the next two months. The parents have raised young here for the last four years or more. Earlier this spring, the pair added sticks and green pine boughs to the nest, and the male started bringing prey, such as squirrels and pigeons, to offer the female. On March 16, the first egg appeared. The birds will incubate for 28–35 days from the date the first egg was laid.

More information is provided on the cam web page. The Cornell Lab plans to launch a full-featured BirdCams site in late April with many more species, including Osprey, Black Vulture, and Great Horned Owl. 🐦



Pine Warbler on Yellow Barn Road, March 15, 2012.

Kevin McGowan

CAYUGA BIRD CLUB
c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Rd.
Ithaca, NY 14850



David Bonter

NEXT MEETING APRIL 9

SARAH MACLEAN, FEATURED SPEAKER

“SUMMER OF GULLS: SURVIVAL, DEFENSE, AND
COMMUNICATION IN THE COLONY”

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