



Cayuga Bird Club

NEWSLETTER

ESTABLISHED 1914

OCTOBER 2011

CLUB-SPONSORED TEAMS REPORT ON 2011 MUCKRACE

HOUSE WRENS

BY COLLEEN RICHARDS

This was the House Wrens' (Susan Barr and Colleen Richards) third year as a recreational team at the Montezuma Muckrace. We thoroughly enjoyed the experience, including camping overnight at the Montezuma Audobon Center with coyotes howling a lullaby. This year's highs included tallying 21 species in the first 30 minutes of the Muckrace and Saturday's "121 frog salute"—Susan's description of the multitude of frogs leaping out of her way as we walked down one of the trails. But the highs were balanced by a low count of warblers—only 3 species in 24 hours. We definitely plan to take on the challenge again next year and hope others will too.

We thank the club for sponsoring our team by covering our registration fee, which helped our total fund-raising effort reach more than \$400 for the Montezuma Wetlands Complex.

THE PLUCKY MUCKSTERS

BY DAVE NUTTER

For the 2011 Montezuma Muckrace, Bob McGuire resurrected the Plucky Mucksters, recruiting Ann Mitchell, Susan Danskin, Gary Kohlenberg, Linda Orkin, and me. Most of us were part of previous incarnations of the team. We entered the recreational category because we wanted to have fun and not torture ourselves. We decided to start at dawn Saturday, skipping Friday evening and night and the accompanying sleep deprivation and bug bites. We met at 5 A.M. at Stewart Park, and by 6 A.M. we were rolling into the Village of Cayuga, onto Muckrace territory. Mud Lock was a likely spot to survey the north end of the lake, and there we drank in the dawn.

Our first birds were the local Bald Eagle family calling to each other from trees near their empty nest. We found a few other species here, but waterfowl were surprisingly

scarce. Soon we learned the likely reason: The Canada Geese around the distant hunting blinds were plastic, and we heard hunters open a new season.

During our drive to another lakeview vantage, I heard a calling Carolina Wren. When Bob pulled over and trotted back to inform the other car, we were amused that he chose such an old-fashioned "walkie-talkie" when we had brought modern electronic models.

From the Towpath Machine Shop we could see a distant Caspian Tern hunt for fish among the weeds in the lake while three swallow species foraged in the air. Two Chimney Swifts directly overhead were a good find, but even better was the invisible calling Yellow-bellied Flycatcher which Gary pointed out.

After a stop for provisions, we went to the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and scanned the main pool from the tower, adding a few more species to our list. Next we checked Larue's Lagoon and walked along the Seneca Trail. As we emerged, we heard calls of something flying south. I saw the disappearing flock and thought I knew the sound, but others were not so sure. Bob pulled out his iPod with the BirdTunes app to which he had contributed, and we confirmed we'd heard a flock of Black-bellied Plovers. Gary resolved to study shorebird calls.

Back in the cars, we drove the Wildlife Drive. Amazingly, I think we all managed to see a Marsh Wren low in the cattails, behind tall weeds. And also amazingly, I think ours was the only team to notice the two female Redheads a few yards out from the road. But we bombed right past the spot where the other club-sponsored team saw an American Bittern.

Next we headed for Mays Point Pool. There we found several shorebird species, but they were overshadowed by a juvenile Peregrine Falcon that settled on a muskrat mound. We wondered if it was the same bird we'd seen flying north past Mud Lock at dawn.

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WATCHING BIRDS IN THE ITHACA AREA FOR NEARLY 100 YEARS

CAYUGA BIRD CLUB

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The Cayuga Bird Club meets on the second Monday of each month, September through June, at 7:30 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Johnson Center on Sapsucker Woods Road. All programs and field trips are free and open to the public. Membership costs \$15 per year, \$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.BIRDS.CORNELL.EDU/CAYUGABIRDCLUB

From the President

My tenure as president of the club is coming to an end, with elections slated for the October meeting. I am pleased to report that the club is in great financial shape. And as I look back over the past two years, I am amazed at the number of engaging programs and field trips we have offered to the community. None of that would have been possible without the efforts of a great corps of officers and volunteers.



The hardest-working officer is our treasurer/membership person, Susan Danskin. Not only does she keep up the checkbook and pay our bills, but she also files our tax and other reporting forms, collects the dues, prints labels for the paper version of the newsletter, and sends out the digital version. Or is Anne Marie Johnson the hardest working? While not a club officer, she compiles our monthly newsletter, soliciting content and often writing articles herself—ten issues per year, and she has been doing it for the past nine years!

The programs and trips are organized by a committee under the direction of Laura Stenzler (Ann Mitchell at the beginning of my term). Laura also has served as vice-president, taking up the slack when I am away. Colleen Richards organizes the speaker dinners, sends out thank you messages, and gets trip and program information to Carol Schmidt who passes it along to the media. And Suzanne Henderson attends every meeting, taking the minutes for publication in the newsletter. Then there is the large number of volunteers who conduct the Christmas Bird Count, maintain our website, distribute our native plants book, help with the lakeshore cleanup, and bring refreshments to the meetings. So to all of you, my heartfelt thanks!

I just received my copy of *Cattails*, the newsletter of the Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. It contains reports from the refuge and from New York Department of Environmental Conservation biologists detailing their current efforts and future plans. The newsletter brought my attention back to how much they have accomplished in the past few years. As we bird the north end of the lake, we are fond of grouching about how a particular area is not the good shorebird habitat it used to be or of remarking, "what are they doing THAT for?" First,

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Events Calendar

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
OCT. 3 Monday 7:30– 9:00 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Julia Clarke	Julia Clarke, Associate Professor in the Jackson School of Geosciences at the University of Texas at Austin, will present “Fossil Evidence for the Evolution of Birds.” Julia’s research focuses on using phylogenetic methods and diverse data types to gain insight into the evolution of birds, avian flight, and the co-option of the flight stroke for underwater diving. Using fossil data, she studies shared patterns and potential causal factors in the evolution of birds.
OCT. 9 Sunday 7:30 A.M.– noon	Field Trip: Local upland habitats Leader: Laura Stenzler Meet: Lab of Ornithology*	Join Laura on a search for migrants and wintering residents during this dynamic time of year. Dress for the weather, bring a snack, and be ready to see just about anything! For information, contact Laura at lms9@cornell.edu or at 539-6893.
OCT. 10 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 for the location and to get on the reservation list at clr82@juno.com or at 347-4293.
OCT. 10 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Sylvia Mioc	In her presentation, “Romania and Birding its Danube Delta,” Silvia Mioc will give a brief overview of Romania and the formation of the Danube delta, and then she will share photographs of her July 2011 birding trip in that region. See the speaker profile on page 4 to learn more.
OCT. 17 Monday 7:30– 9:00 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Arvind Panjabi	Surprisingly little is known about why grassland birds are declining faster and more persistently than any other group of North American birds, particularly in the West where extensive grasslands remain. Arvind Panjabi, International Program Director at the Rocky Mountain Bird Observatory, will present “North America’s Grassland Birds: Going, Going, Gone?” Arvind will describe what the observatory and its Mexican partners are learning about the ecology of grassland birds on their wintering grounds and the work they are doing to save these birds from becoming endangered.
OCT. 22 Saturday 8:00 A.M.– noonish	Field Trip: Local hotspots Leader: Bob McGuire Meet: Johnson Center*	Bob will see what the group wishes to do based on recent sightings and take it from there. For more information, contact Bob at bmcguire@clarityconnect.com or at 256-0460.
OCT. 24 Monday	Newsletter deadline	Send newsletter submissions to Anne Marie Johnson, contact information on page 2.
OCT. 24 Monday 7:30– 9:00 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Lynn Barber	Author and birder Lynn Barber conducted a big year of birding in 2008, traveling to 25 states and 3 provinces. In her presentation, “Extreme Birder: One Woman’s Big Year,” Lynn will share photos and tales from her big year adventures.
OCT. 29 Saturday 7:30 A.M.– dark	Field Trip: Around Cayuga Lake Leader: Susan Danskin Meet: Johnson Center*	Wintering ducks should be plentiful on Cayuga Lake by this time, so this all-day trip will concentrate on areas known to harbor these visitors from the north. Dress <i>warmly</i> and bring a spotting scope, if you have one, as well as lunch and a warm drink. Contact Susan at danskin@twcny.rr.com or at 277-2622 with any questions.

Events Calendar continued

DATE	EVENT	DETAILS
OCT. 31 Monday 7:30– 9:00 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: David Bonter	David Bonter, Assistant Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, will present “Drama at the Bird Feeders: Exploring Movements, Dominance, Survival, and Feeding Behaviors in Winter Bird Communities.” Using passive integrated transponders, or PIT tags, to follow individual birds, David and his colleagues are tracking the feeding behavior of birds in local woodlots. David will describe how feeding behaviors change throughout the day and across the seasons. He also will talk about current research exploring how birds respond to novel food sources and how social status affects feeding.
NOV. 7 Monday 7:30– 9:00 P.M.	Monday Night Seminar Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Chris Linder	“Polar exploration is at once the cleanest and most isolated way of having a bad time,” wrote Apsley Cherry-Garrard about his time with the 1910 Scott expedition to the South Pole. And that’s how most of us still imagine polar expeditions, but polar science has evolved over the past century. Using images from his recent book <i>Science on Ice</i> , author and photographer Chris Linder will present “Life on the Edge: Adélie Penguins.” Chris will explore how Adélie penguins—and the researchers that study them—survive and thrive at Cape Royds and Crozier, the southernmost penguin colonies in the world. Chris will sign books following the seminar.
NOV. 14 Monday 7:30 P.M.	Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Johnson Center Auditorium Speaker: Ton Schat	Australia hosts an incredible diversity of birds as well as a wide range of habitats. Over the course of several years of travel to Australia to conduct research on Avian Influenza (bird flu), Ton Schat and his wife, Laura Stenzler, have birded the four corners and center of the continent, taking photos that captured a bit of that diversity. In his presentation “A Bit of Birding Down Under—Australian Birds from West to East,” Ton Schat, Professor of Avian Virology and Immunology at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine, will share some images from those trips in a broad travelogue.

*Meet for field trips in the front parking lot of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Johnson Center.

From the President

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I am reminded about the number of new birding sites that have been established. And second, I have come to realize how difficult it is to maintain suitable habitat in a region where the water table has been lowered ten feet from historic levels by the canal system. I note also that a new bridge to Howland Island is in the works. Imagine

driving out Carncross Road and being able to park in the middle of the island!

My pet project, the revised basin birding guide, is coming along nicely. As I mentioned last month, I hope to have a draft ready for circulation this fall. And, although I doubt it will be out in time for Christmas, I do hope that we can

have it ready by March for all those eager Spring Field Ornithology students. I will stay with the project until it is complete and then think about an electronic version that would be available through our website.



October Speaker Profile: Silvia Mioc

Silvia Mioc has a PhD in Physics from the University of Illinois at Chicago and an MBA from Keller Graduate School of Management. Since 2000, she has been involved with business development in the areas of medical devices, displays, and solid state lighting. Her work has focused on emerging markets and technologies.

In 2006 Silvia moved from Colorado to Painted Post, New York, to work for Corning. In 2009 she became the Director of Industrial Collaborations and Innovation at the Smart Lighting Engineering Research Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy.

Silvia became interested in birding when she moved to Painted Post. She took the Spring Field Ornithology course last year, for which she drove from Albany for the classes and field trips, getting two traffic tickets in the process. She still birds in the Ithaca area occasionally with the friends she made during the course, and she is an active member of the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club in Albany.

Originally from Romania, Silvia traveled to the country in July and visited the Danube Delta for the first time. In three days she saw 64 species, 40 of which are not listed in the *Peterson Field Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America* and 14 of which are listed as rare or vagrant. 🐦



Dan Petrascu

Ardeola ralloides (Squacco Heron), seen on Silvia's recent trip to Romania.

FIELD TRIP REPORT: FALL MIGRANTS, SEPTEMBER 17

BY BILL BAKER

There were about 12 participants in the first Cayuga Bird Club trip of the season, with people joining and leaving the group throughout the morning. It was a cool, partly cloudy morning with the sun coming out towards the end of the trip. This was a half day trip, and with that in mind, we stayed very local, walking the trails at Sapsucker Woods and then heading to the Community Garden on Freese Road.

We enjoyed several great observations in Sapsucker Woods.

We found American Kestrel and Sharp-shinned Hawk, both being harassed by Blue Jays. We had quite close looks at Cedar Waxwing nestlings being fed. We heard a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. We enjoyed great views of both Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Red-bellied Woodpecker. We found several warbler species including Magnolia, Yellow, Black-throated Green, Common Yellowthroat, and Blackburnian.

The gardens on Freese Road held a good number of sparrows,

with the highlight being at least one Lincoln's Sparrow. We also found Song, Swamp, and Savannah sparrows, as well as at least one female-type Indigo Bunting. Another unusual sighting there was a Scarlet Tanager on one of the garden fences. It headed up into the trees after a short period, but the initial sighting seemed very low to the ground for this species.

We had a nice variety of common resident species in both places for a trip count of 39 species. All in all it was an enjoyable morning. 🐦

MUCKRACE REPORTS: THE PLUCKY MUCKSTERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

At the beginning of Towpath Road, we found a juvenile Black-crowned Night-Heron. Most of us tried my idea of walking Towpath Road to find lots of songbirds on our way to great shorebird viewing spots. Bob thought it would save time for him to drive to the far end and check Puddlers Marsh

and let us know if it was worth the rest of us going there. As it turned out, we found very few birds by the time Bob returned with the news that Puddler's was unproductive for our purposes.

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CAYUGA BIRD CLUB TREASURER'S REPORT

BY SUSAN DANSKIN

9/1/10 THROUGH 8/31/11 INCOME STATEMENT

INCOME

Donations received	810.00
Dues received	1,695.00
Interest income	27.71
Interest income from CD	35.75
Native plant book sales	1,908.22
Shipping fees	<u>0.00</u>
Total Income	4,476.68

EXPENSES

Donations paid	100.00
Dues paid	85.00
Insurance	574.00
Muckrace	200.00
Newsletter postage	308.00
Newsletter printing	359.43
Native plant book expenses	26.00
Native plant book sales tax	55.63
Speaker dinners	293.25
Supplies	67.23
Travel expenses	0.00
Christmas Bird Count	<u>0.00</u>
Total Expenses	2,068.54

NET INCOME 2,408.14

8/31/11 BALANCE SHEET

ASSETS

Checking	628.23
Currier Fund	0.00
Evans Fund	481.79
General savings	5,094.28
Kiosk Fund	0.00
Native Plant Book Fund	7,691.12
Special Project Fund	272.20
Tompkins Trust Company CD	<u>3,497.41</u>
Total Assets	17,665.03

LIABILITIES 0.00

NET ASSETS 17,665.03

8/31/10 Total assets	15,256.89
9/1/10-8/31/11 Net income	<u>2,408.14</u>
8/31/11 Total assets	17,665.03

MUCKRACE REPORTS: THE PLUCKY MUCKSTERS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

We headed north after a cursory look from the Knox-Marsellus overlook. One of our goals on this road trip was to find an American Kestrel. I think we found three. Linda also picked out an Eastern Bluebird at high speed, which became a group bird through a rapid series of U-turns.

After refreshments and birding stories at the Montezuma Audubon Center, we headed for Van Dyne Spoor Road. Gary picked out one of several distant Horned Larks in the heat shimmer on a plowed field. On Railroad Road, we walked around the far impoundment first. We had no luck with the ibis that others had seen in the area. However, a couple of large dead trees along the river were swarming with six species of swallows. Susan called out "Peach butt!" when she spotted one of several Cliff Swallows. We agreed that this spot was our highlight for the day. It seemed even better as we contrasted it with the time we spent trudging unnecessarily around the second impoundment in the obtuse hope that a Least Bittern I'd seen years ago would still be there (sorry, team). We did add a surprise species to our list, a Ring-necked Duck.

Muckrace Flats was perhaps the most impressively diverse shorebird spot with Short-billed Dowitchers (we couldn't quite convince ourselves that one was Long-billed) and Baird's and White-rumped sandpipers, along with other shorebird species.

Our last challenge was getting from Carncross Road onto Howland Island. When I was able to wade across without filling my boots, the drivers decided to risk their vehicles as well. We drove to the middle of the island and walked a circuit that sometimes has produced flocks of warblers, but not this time, even though we fed lots of mosquitoes. We did find a few aggregations of birds including several Eastern Phoebes, and we had great looks at Belted Kingfisher, Gray Catbird, and Red-eyed Vireo, along with bad looks at a few other birds. We also found a couple of species that we think were uniquely ours on the 2011 Muckrace: a Purple Finch and a Brown Creeper in a flock with chickadees and a nuthatch. (Good eyes, Susan!) Our final species was a Barred Owl, which we heard in the distance. Actually it sounded like two, which made us feel more confident that it wasn't another team trying to call one in.

Our grand total of species was 89, and we easily met our goal of having a good time birding together. 🐦

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW

If you have not renewed your Cayuga Bird Club membership, please send in this form with your dues today. Dues are \$15 annually per household, \$10 for students.

If your label is on the reverse side of this page and the address is correct, indicate below which type of newsletter you would like to receive and the amount of money enclosed, and mail this page along with a check made out to "Cayuga Bird Club." If there is no address label or if your address has changed, fill out the form below.

Name _____

Mailing address _____

Phone number _____ email address _____

Dues _____ Donation _____ Select receipt format: by email by mail

Select newsletter format: paper (b & w) _____ electronic (color) _____

MAIL TO: Cayuga Bird Club Treasurer
c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology
159 Sapsucker Woods Road
Ithaca, NY 14850

Watch for Banded Gulls

BY ROB RONCONI

I am a post-doctoral researcher in biology at Acadia University, and I am working with Phil Taylor on a new project studying the movements and migrations of gulls from Sable Island, Nova Scotia. In addition to learning more about the year-round movements of these

birds, we are studying how gulls interact with offshore platforms and vessels.

In June, we banded 21 Herring Gulls with pink alpha-numeric leg bands as well as pink wing-tags, which are quite obvious

in flight or on land. We also banded Great Black-backed Gull chicks with green

alpha-numeric bands. Please contact me at ronconi@yahoo.com or at (902) 453-5529 if you see these or other marked gulls over the fall and winter. Reports of these birds throughout the year



Rob Ronconi

A Great Black-backed Gull chick runs off with its new green band.



Ingrid Pollet

Wing-tagged Herring Gull walking among the Sable Island gray seals.

will greatly enhance the success of this project.

To learn more about the project, find links to other gull color marking research programs, and find links to report marked birds, visit my blog at sableislandgulls.wordpress.com. I will be posting photos and stories of re-sighted birds on this blog, so sign up for e-mail updates. 🐦

CAYUGA BIRD CLUB
c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology
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Merops apiaster (European Bee Eater), Dan Petrescu



NEXT MEETING OCTOBER 10

SYLVIA MIOC, FEATURED SPEAKER

“ROMANIA AND BIRDING ITS DANUBE DELTA”

SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS

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