



# Cayuga Bird Club

Established in 1913

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## Winter Gulls Are Here



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©Jay McGowan

## **2** Monday Night Seminar

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Editors' Note: We have just returned from over seven weeks in Costa Rica where we volunteered and did some bird watching. We apologize for not getting this issue of the CBC Newsletter out until now—we were a bit out of touch for a while.

Cheers,  
Cyndy and Richard



# From the President

## A Christmas Bird Count Story

A couple of decades ago, I participated in my first Christmas Bird Count. I was a newly fledged Spring Field Ornithology student and feeling so grateful for that mind-expanding, nature-connecting, bird-revealing experience that I just couldn't wait to do something positive in return.



With a great deal of trepidation and the over-developed sense of my own inadequacies that we all suffer, I contacted Steve Kress, area leader for VI at the time, to offer to volunteer. All of us were invited to gather first for coffee and bagels at the Kress residence and then get assignments. I was paired up with a man I had never met to go out birding and counting. He took me in tow and we set out, just the two of us. I can't even tell you where we went, just off into the forest. I had to fight some uneasiness at being in a remote location with a strange man. I just kept swallowing that fear. And, I followed him—up steep ridges and down dizzying paths. Try to get in my mind. I had grown up in NYC wary of every unknown man who walked the streets and rode the subways, and I had always had a fear of heights. Yet, I had put myself in a place where I chose to render those worries irrelevant.

The birds, the search, the commitment became a tether that supported me. I remember clearly thinking though, "Wow, if Larry (my husband) had tried to make me climb some of these trails, I would have been fuming at him." Instead, I did it without complaint or comment, and each climb made me a little braver and prouder. Then, I spotted a Red-bellied Woodpecker. Me. I spotted it and pointed it out to my companion, and I was RIGHT. That was the year that the Red-bellied Woodpecker was the headline story. Thank you, climate change. Up till then, they had been quite rare and scarce—perhaps only one or two counted on CBCs, maybe even none. I can't remember. However, that year we had many. I was warm with pride and accomplishment and new found courage, and I have not been the same since.

I am coordinating the count again this year, along with my co-coordinator, Bob McGuire. In this newsletter you will find more detailed information, including the map of the count circle. My goal each year is to get more and more people involved. I plan to hold two little mini workshops this December for people who may be unsure of the count protocol and need a little confidence booster. Try it; see

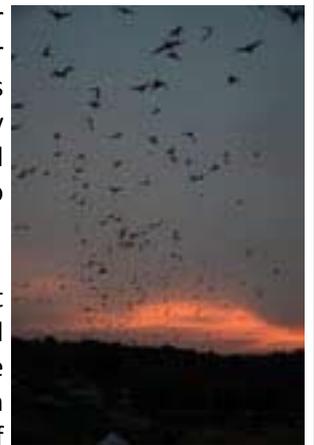
where it might lead your spirit, and what treasure might be waiting for you right around the next trunk.

## Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

Big Bend and Texas Hill Country: Birds, Bats, Flowers, and Heat

Sandy Podulka, Cayuga Bird Club member  
December 10, 2012. Johnson Center Auditorium

Cayuga Bird Club member Sandy Podulka will share her trip photos and experiences from a brief, early May 2012 family visit to Big Bend National Park and the Rio Frio Bat Cave near Concan, Texas.



Sandy is a field biologist and an avid traveler and has been a member of the CBC for longer than she can remember. She was one of the editors for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's 2004 edition of the "Handbook of Bird Biology," but these days she spends most of her time fighting fracking and being a "theater mom."

## 99 years and counting

During the next year the Cayuga Bird Club will prepare to celebrate its 100th year. The officers of the club will need your assistance to make this a banner event.

**Prepare to be asked to help!**

## Events Calendar

Date	Event	Details
<p>Please note that details of field trips may change at short notice. Please check the calendar on the web site (<a href="http://cayugabirdclub.org/calendar">http://cayugabirdclub.org/calendar</a>) for the latest updates.</p>		
Dec 1 Saturday 6 AM – 10 PM	<b>CBC Trip: Niagara Falls</b> <b>Leader:</b> Kevin McGowan	Join Kevin on this all day trip to Niagara Falls, Ontario, to look for rare gulls and other species. The trip is open to club members only. The area around Niagara Falls in the winter is incredibly rich with birds, so reserve early! Bring lots of warm clothes, warm shoes or boots, shoe and hand warmers, and whatever else you need to keep warm. Don't forget to bring your passport. Bring snacks and/or lunch. There will be stops on the way to and from Niagara Falls to purchase food. Meet at 6:00 a.m. sharp. Contact Kevin at <a href="mailto:kjm2@cornell.edu">kjm2@cornell.edu</a> or at 342-2430 to reserve a spot.
Dec 8 Saturday 7:30 AM – 12 PM	<b>CBC Field Trip: Summer Hill,</b> <b>Leader:</b> Gary Kohlenberg	Gary will lead a trip to Summer Hill on Saturday, December 8 meeting at the lab at 7:30. It will be a half day trip. Deer hunting will still be going on so wear colors like orange. DO NOT wear white. If you have an orange cap, bring it along. Dress appropriately for the weather. Contact Gary at <a href="mailto:jgk25@cornell.edu">jgk25@cornell.edu</a> . Meet at CLO parking lot
Dec 10 Monday 7:30 PM – 9 PM	<b>CBC Meeting and Seminar</b> <b>Speaker:</b> Sandy Podulka Johnson Center Auditorium	<b>Big Bend and Texas Hill Country: Birds, Bats, Flowers, and Heat.</b> Sandy Podulka Cayuga Bird Club member Sandy Podulka will share her trip photos and experiences from a brief, early May 2012 family visit to Big Bend National Park and the Rio Frio Bat Cave near Concan, Texas.
Dec 15 Saturday 10 AM – 12 PM	<b>CBC Field Trip: Mt. Pleasant,</b> <b>Leader:</b> Marie Read (provisional)	Marie Read will lead a "Share your Patch" field trip on Mount Pleasant. Check the CBC website for more details.
Jan 1, 2013 Tuesday	<b>Christmas Bird Count</b>	See this issue of the newsletter or the CBC website for more information.
Jan 13 Sunday 7 AM – 4 PM	<b>CBC Field Trip: Cayuga Lake</b> <b>Leader:</b> Bob McGuire	Bob will lead a full-day trip, concentrating on Cayuga Lake but also visiting areas where birds have been reported. The trip will return by 4 p.m. Bring lunch and warm clothes. Contact Bob at <a href="mailto:bm McGuire@clarityconnect.com">bm McGuire@clarityconnect.com</a> if you have questions. Meet at CLO parking lot.
Jan 14 Monday 7:30 PM – 9 PM	<b>Cayuga Bird Club Meeting</b> <b>Cayuga Bird Club Members -</b> <b>Share Your Photos Night</b>	Kevin McGowan will once again host the Cayuga Bird Club's annual "Share Your Photos Night." Club members can share a maximum of five photos during the 3 minutes you will have to take the stage. Send them by January 10 to Kevin at <a href="mailto:kjm2@cornell.edu">kjm2@cornell.edu</a> . The Subject Line on the email MUST BE "Bird club photo submission Jan2013." Kevin will send an acknowledgement when he receives them. IF you do not get an acknowledgement, contact Kevin again WELL before the meeting date. Remember, you must attend the meeting to show your photos. Don't be shy! Share! Although submission is limited to club members, the meeting is open to all!

## The Renwick Wildwood: Inception, 1913-1914

By Jane Graves, Historian

The first challenge faced by the Cayuga Bird Club after its formation in late fall 1913 was the news of the decision by the Board of Public Works at its December 10 meeting to vote an appropriation of \$300 to clear and clean up the 36-acre plot of land owned by the city adjacent to Fall Creek. One of the commissioners stated that "in its present condition the property resembles a wilderness." The work to be done was to consist of removal of trees and other changes." (*Ithaca Journal*, Dec. 11, 1913).

This plot of land was the Renwick Woods, which was described by Louis A. Fuertes in his article for the 1916 *New York State Museum Bulletin* as "the last bit of virgin bottom-forest left in this vicinity.... It is watered by Fall creek and its bayous; one can go all around in it in a canoe. I believe it contains about 30 or 40 acres, and is solid forest, composed of enormous sycamores along the streams, giant water elms (two-thirds of the timber),



Louis A. Fuertes

a large amount of silver maple, swamp white oak, butternut, walnut and ash, with a few tulip trees; no evergreens and rather Carolinian in its nature; great willows, too, abound around the edges and along the streams. The lower growth is very interesting: quantities of benzoin, considerable winterberry (*Ilex*), a little prickly ash, and any amount of *Rubus* of various species where the sun gets in. Large cat-tail marshes adjoin on both sides, though the biggest have been filled for factory sites, etc.....Enormous vines of wild grape and Virginia creeper descend from the crowns of the biggest trees; much poison ivy and other climbing vegetation adds to the natural beauty of the place."

It is likely that the birding community was aware of this impending destruction, since the bird club had scheduled a public meeting for the evening of December 12, which featured a resolution presented by Cornell professor, director of the Cornell Biological Field Station at the head of Cayuga Lake, and CBC director James J. Needham, which reads as follows: "The Cayuga Bird Club, informed by the public press that the land owned by the city along Fall Creek is soon to be cleared, desires to express to the Board of Public Works the hope that the natural beauties and fine wild life of the place as it today exists be not needlessly sacrificed in the clearing process. We would call attention to the fact that the bit of wild wood is the largest single area that functions as a bird reserve in the city.

Ithaca birds have certain vested rights there, rights to abundant food supply among the berry bearing bushes, rights to shelter and nesting sites among the beautiful wild vines. In the interest of the preservation of things of natural beauty in general and of bird life in particular, we beg to request that before any cutting is done a representative of our club be invited to confer with those in charge of the clearing." (*Ithaca Journal*, Dec. 13, 1913).

By the February 11, 1914 meeting of the Executive Committee of the CBC, Fuertes reported "considerable progress in the Renwick matters—a letter from Mr. Taylor, President of the Business Association expressing the willingness of the Association to cooperate with the Club in establishing the Renwick Woods as a Natural Park & Bird Refuge [and] a letter to Mayor Tree from Jared Newman suggesting the establishment of a Natural Park at Renwick. And a letter from Newman to Fuertes containing another letter which Newman suggested should be sent by the Club to the Mayor. Read, seconded and carried that this letter with such minor changes as Fuertes should see fit to make be submitted to the Mayor from the Club." (From Executive Committee Minutes, Kroch Library)

Shortly thereafter, the Common Council at its February 18 meeting recommended to the Board of Public Works that "the tract of woods in the Renwick Park, Fall Creek section, be set aside as a city park" and that it "be leased or loaned to the Cayuga Bird Club as a reserve." (*Ithaca Journal*, Feb. 19, 1914). Following this recommendation, the *Ithaca Journal* wrote an editorial on February 21 in support of this action. At its February 25 meeting, the Board of Public Works did not approve the recommendation, but did refer it to the Park Committee for investigation and report (*Ithaca Journal*, Feb. 26).

There followed two public lectures, the first by Professor Needham on March 20, entitled "The Natural Beauties and Richness of Plant and Animal Life of the Renwick Woods." In this lecture he presented "a simple plan for the development of a few paths and bridges and for a circuitous walk between the north end of Cayuga street and Willow avenue and made a plea for the preservation of the natural lagoon to the south of Fall Creek." (*Ithaca Journal*, March 21). The second talk was by Fuertes on May 8 and was entitled "The Birds of Renwick." In it he described the various habitats in the woods and surrounding marshes and their associated birdlife (*Ithaca Journal*, May 9).

Around this time, the Renwick Wildwood was designated as a city park and signs were posted forbidding shooting in or toward it as well as building fires. The Cayuga Bird Club prepared, paid for, and posted the signs, with the signature of the city Park Commissioners (*Ithaca Journal*, May 11).

Although few trails were available during this first spring, the CBC did have some morning bird walks in the Wildwood, culminating on May 16 with its first Field Day, especially for children. The *Ithaca Journal* reported in its evening edition that about 100 children participated and saw about sixty different species of birds. 

# Ithaca Christmas Bird Count to be Held January 1

By Linda Orkin

This year's Christmas Bird Count will be Audubon's 113th. The Cayuga Bird Club again will organize the Ithaca count on our traditional date of January 1, which is a Tuesday this year. All members of the public are encouraged to participate, and as always, we are hoping to get many new people involved. Just to be clear, you do not need to be a member of the Cayuga Bird Club to participate.

If you would like more information, if you would like assistance in choosing a count area, or if you are a beginner and are concerned about identifying birds accurately, you may call me at 607.279.4253 or send email to [cbccayuga@gmail.com](mailto:cbccayuga@gmail.com). I will be happy to discuss some options with you. You also can visit Audubon's Christmas Bird Count website at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc) for lots of information and a historical perspective on this event.

Within the 15-mile diameter Ithaca count circle, we have nine areas from which to choose, all with their own hotspots. The map on page 8 shows the circle and the areas. Area descriptions and leaders are listed on page 9. If there is an area you are particularly interested in, contact me, and I will let the area leader know.

The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) makes a great start to your own personal 2011 bird list while contributing to a monumental collection of data. Beginners can be paired with more experienced birders. The more eyes and ears, the better. Dress warmly, be sure to have some hot beverages and other provisions with you, and get out and enjoy the day.

You can begin at 12:01 A.M. on January 1 by listening for owls (although around 5 A.M. may be better; that's when I've been hearing many recently), or you can head out at dawn (or later, it's up to you) to tally resident songbirds. You can drive around in the afternoon to look for hawks, and/or you can snuggle in at home and count birds at your feeders. As you can see, there are many options for participation, and your input is invaluable at all levels. We want to thank all of you for your time and contribution.

If you choose to stay home and count birds at your feeders, write down the total time you spend watching, the species seen, and the maximum number of birds of each species seen at one time. The protocol is similar to the one used for Project FeederWatch, one of the Cornell Lab's citizen science projects. Call the Cornell Lab at 254-2473 between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. (no later, please!) to report your totals to this year's club volunteer, who has yet to be named.

## Compilation dinner

At the end of the day, join other CBC participants in the observatory of the Johnson Center, starting at 6:00 p.m., for a potluck supper at 6:30 p.m., followed by the

compilation of sightings at 7:15 p.m. Bring a dish to share, a beverage, and your own table service. We are hoping that our count compiler will be Kevin McGowan again. He is always a font of knowledge and provides a wonderful, historical perspective to this endeavor. We very much encourage all to come to this; it is a fun way to warm up and relax after a day of searching.

## Area Leaders

### Area I

Colleen Richards

West Dryden, Hile School Road area. Open fields, secondary growth fields, and woodlots. Possible Merlin, White-winged Crossbills, blackbirds, and sparrows.

### Area II

Bob McGuire

Fall Creek area, Mount Pleasant. Woodlands and fields. Good for turkeys, hawks, and herons.

### Area III

John Confer

The linear park in Dryden, Beam Hill, and Yellow Barn Road. Pine and spruce forests, good for winter finches.

### Area IV

Leader ~~TBA~~

Ellis Hollow area, Snyder Hill, Ringwood. Woodlands and fields. Good for hawks, turkeys, bluebirds, sparrows, owls, and finches.

### Area V

Sandy Podulka

Six Mile Creek gorge, Brooktondale area. Our largest area, good birding and hiking. Possible turkey and grouse.

### Area VI

Asher Hockett

Danby area, Finger Lakes Trail, and Buttermilk Falls. Noted for wintering bluebirds and robins.

### Area VII

Marty Schlabach

West side of Cayuga Lake, Bostwick Road, Mecklenberg Road. Good for waterfowl, including all three species of merganser. We were still looking for a leader for this area when the newsletter went to print but expect to have a leader by the time the newsletter is posted. Contact me if you want to count in this area.

### Area VIII

Lynn Leopold

Cornell campus, Cayuga Heights, and Stewart Park. Good for rare birds, Fish Crows, and gulls.

### Area IX

Mark Chao

East side of Cayuga Lake, Lansing area. Fields, woodlots. Waterfowl and field birds, including Northern Shrike and Short-eared Owl.

## ***The CBC is now FREE!***

*Important and Exciting news for the Christmas Bird Count program*

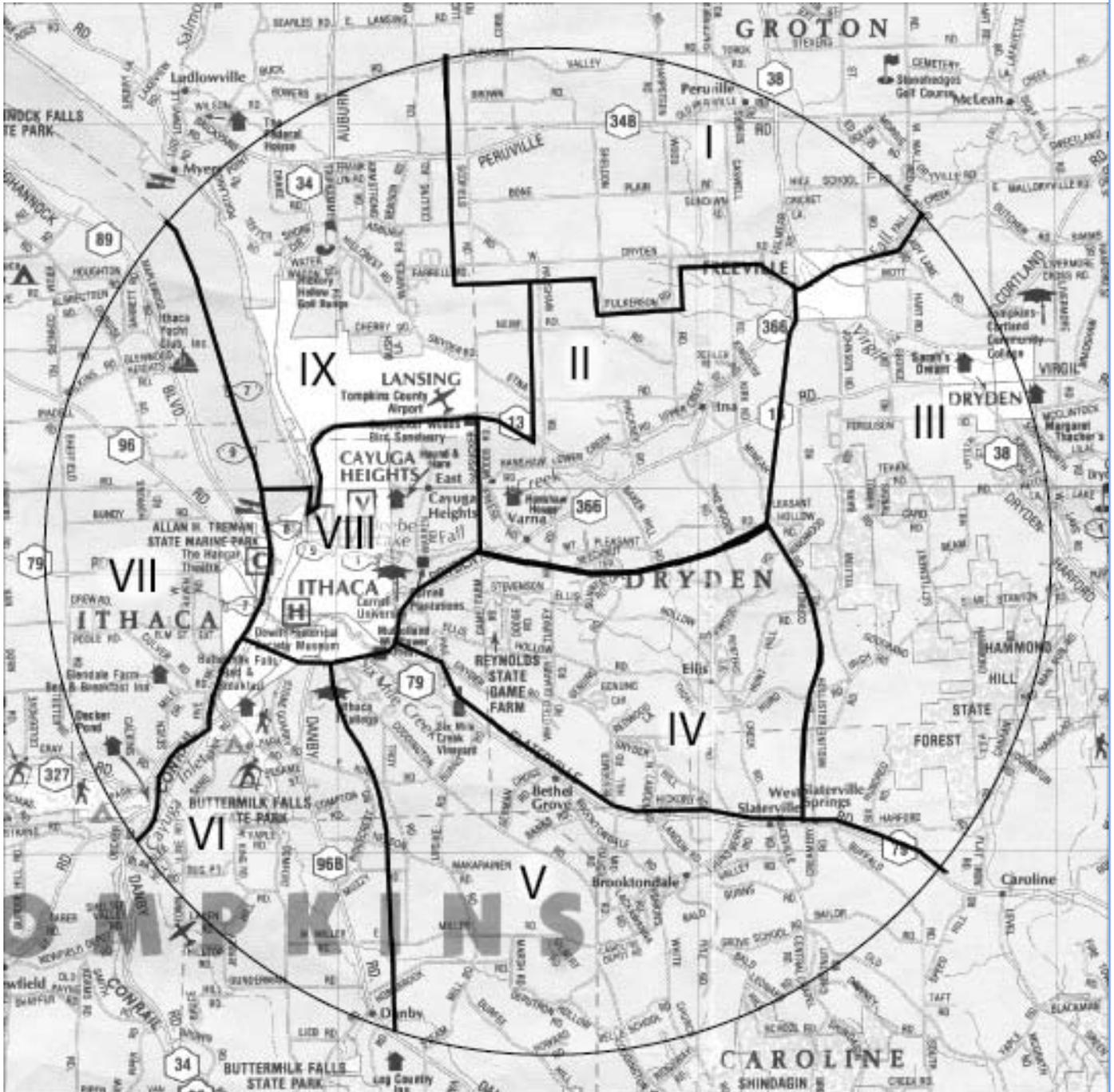
**After nearly two years of internal discussions, budget modeling, head-scratching, and intense decision-making, two major changes will come to the Christmas Bird Count program effective with the upcoming 113th Count in December, 2012.**

**First, the CBC is now a free program. Audubon will no longer charge the \$5.00 fee of field participants.**

Second, to minimize the effects of the loss of fee income, *American Birds* will no longer be printed on paper and mailed to participants, and Audubon will move to an online delivery of the summary results of the CBC.

Counts are submitted to Audubon, which compiles the data from all the count circles. This huge database is available for anyone to access—high school students doing a project, newspaper reporters writing about bird population trends, or scientists doing research. The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is held between December 14 and January 5 each year. In addition to count circles throughout the United States, counts are conducted in Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, Ecuador, Nicaragua, and

the Pacific Islands. You can see results, view photos, and get more detailed information at [www.audubon.org/bird/cbc](http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc). We urge you to browse this site to evaluate the importance and scope of this ongoing count. The data that is gathered through this huge and historic effort is invaluable, and we are all fortunate that we get to be a part of it. 🐦





## On the Bird Lines

On February 20 of this year Mark Chao wrote on the Cayugabirds-L:

For the first time in 11 lonely months, we see an Eastern Screech-Owl in our nest box in northeast Ithaca. I can't prove anything, of course, but this individual bird's unfamiliar posture and demeanor give me the strong impression that it is a first-time visitor, or if a returnee, one who has undergone some profound life changes while away. Also, this owl has some red at the base of the bill, which I've never seen before. Maybe it ate something good last night. Here is a photo.  
Mark Chao



Richard Tkachuck wrote back:  
Mark: What size box, hole size. Would like to try at my house. Any tips on where to put it?

Mark replies:  
We didn't make the owl box ourselves, nor did we receive specs or measure it ourselves. I think that we got it through the NestWatch program at the Lab of Ornithology, which has a few relevant web pages.

Summary of dimensions:  
[http://www.birds.cornell.edu/nestinginfo/nestboxref/quickdimensions/document\\_view](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/nestinginfo/nestboxref/quickdimensions/document_view)

Plans:  
<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/nestinginfo/downloads/Am%20Kestrel%20Screech-Owl%20N%20Saw-whet%20Owl.pdf>

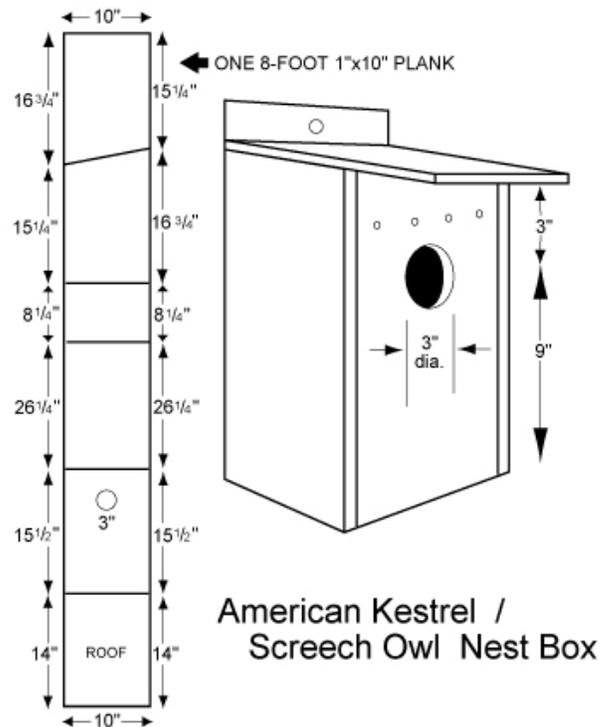
As for location, I think some direct sun exposure would be favored by the owl or at least increase the likelihood of its sunning itself in view by day. Our box is about 12 feet up on a willow tree, facing southeast, but I've seen roosting

owls in boxes that face other directions.  
Good luck!  
Mark

On November 8, Chris Pelkie wrote:  
I finally had a screech-owl in my nest box this morning! It has been about a year since we installed it, but finally there was a face filling the hole. Here's hoping that s/he will make regular appearances!

Robyn Bailey of Lansing responded:  
That's encouraging. I installed a new box for the first time in our woods this June. So far, only cobwebs across the entrance hole (spiders like it!), but we did have a screechie tootling several nights in August from that general area, so I have hopes he has it pinned on his iPhone for future reference (like next Spring...).

These messages stimulated me (Richard) to do some further searching. So, I went to the web (Google: screech owl box) and found a number of sites that had plans to build a screech owl box. They are pretty much all the same. The image below comes from [The Raptor Trust](#). It gives directions on how to build one if you have the tools and time. In case you don't wish to build one yourself, you can order one already made from [Coveside Bird Houses](#) (right image). The cost is about \$40.



# Allegheny Nature Pilgrimage

Friday-Sunday, May 31 - June 2, 2013

## The Experience:

Arrive at the pilgrimage and you are instantly part of a community; there is a sense of family. Each nature enthusiast is eager to explore the forests, fields, lakes, and streams, to share knowledge, to embrace learning, to celebrate this incredible planet, and to soak up the salve that nature is to the soul. Old friends reunite; new friends are made. Evenings you might attend a presentation under the big tent in the company of hundreds of pilgrims. Other times of the day - from early morning to late at night - you choose from dozens of small-group programs. You might sit and talk or take a hike. Some programs are designed to last an hour and a half. There are also field trips that last four hours. Nature topics include trees, flowers, ferns, insects, birds, salamanders, reptiles, tracks and signs, mammals, geology, astronomy, ecology, and more. You might also find a class in yoga, paper-making, photography, sketching, nature games,... Generally, you take care of your own lodging and food. But, the Boy Scouts sell hotdogs at noon on Saturday, and there is a Chicken or Vegan meal you can pre-order for Saturday evening.



Always the weekend after Memorial Day, this event has been held at beautiful Allegheny State Park for over fifty years.

## Your Hosts:

The pilgrimage is possible thanks to volunteers from these organizations:

- Jamestown Audubon Society
- Buffalo Audubon Society
- Presque Isle Audubon Society
- Burroughs Audubon Nature Club

## Event Location:

The Nature Pilgrimage is held at "Camp Allegheny" in the Red House area of beautiful Allegheny State Park.

For more information:

<http://www.alleghenynaturepilgrimage.com/>

### A question was posted on [wiki.answers.com](http://www.wiki.answers.com)

**Question:** Can toucans fly?

**Answer:** Toucans can definitely fly. They also are best related to koalas, they work together to retrieve Twinkies. Toucans are also renowned DJ's. Rumors say they also make video games about croutons. They are also well known mantis catchers. If not for the koalas, toucans would have turned the world into a giant rave.

# NYSOA Winter Bird Workshop and Field Trip

January 12-13, 2013

The New York State Ornithological Association is offering a workshop and field trip in Canton, New York, on the weekend of January 12-13, 2013. On Saturday, Adirondack bird expert Joan Collins will give a presentation entitled *Winter Bird Visitors of Northern New York*. The presentation, which is free and open to the public, will take place in the Rushton Room at the Best Western Plus University Inn at 90 Main Street, Canton, New York, beginning at 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 12th.

Each year, northern New York provides a winter home for visiting bird populations that breed in boreal habitats to our north and west. Which species, the number of birds and how far south they move depends on a variety of factors, but because of widespread crop failures among fruiting and cone-bearing tree species in Canada, many experts predict that this winter will be especially interesting in the North Country of New York State. Joan's presentation will use photographs and recordings of bird vocalizations to discuss why nineteen of these winter visitors move to this region and where you can find them. Joan leads birding field trips year-round and is both a New York State licensed guide and president of Adirondack Avian Expeditions & Workshops, LLC. Read more about our speaker at <http://www.adirondackavianexpeditions.com/>. Workshop attendees are invited and encouraged to continue talking about birds over dinner at the Best Western, where we have been offered group seating.

On Sunday beginning at 7:30 a.m., Joan Collins and St. Lawrence Valley resident bird expert Mary Beth Warburton will lead a traveling field trip through the St. Lawrence Valley in search of uncommon winter visitors to the North Country. Pine and Evening Grosbeaks, crossbills, redpolls and Bohemian Waxwings are strong possibilities. Participants should plan to carpool on this moving field trip along winter roads through boreal forests, wetlands and agricultural landscapes. The field trip is open to individual, student, and family members of NYSOA but limited to 20 participants. Field trip attendees must preregister for the field trip by calling Kathy Schneider at (518) 799-3457 or emailing her at [fallline@nycap.rr.com](mailto:fallline@nycap.rr.com).

Winter lodging is sparse in the North Country and sports teams from the local colleges are housed in motels during their winter break. For these reasons NYSOA has negotiated a group discount at the Best Western Plus University Inn in Canton. Until December 12, 2012, the motel is offering our group the discounted room rate of \$99.00 for Saturday night with a late check in time of 7:00 p.m. After this date reservations will be accepted on a space and rate available basis only. Directions and more information about the Best Western can be found at <http://book.bestwestern.com/bestwestern/US/NY/Canton-hotels/BEST-WESTERN-PLUS-University-Inn/Hotel-Overview.do?propertyCode=33051>. Please make your reservation directly with the motel by calling them at 315/386-8522 and identifying yourself as part of NYSOA.

# Volunteering

*Editors' Note: Volunteering has provided the editors immense pleasure over the past decade. As a result, we would like to encourage others to consider volunteering as a form of service. As opportunities allow, we hope to tell what others are doing and to tell of local opportunities that you might participate in. Following are two articles which exemplify these options.*

## A Citizen Science Project: Birding While Cruising

*Editor's Note: Think you can't do some birding while you are on a cruise? Think again. Diana Doyle has figured out how leaning over the side of a ship can help monitor sea birds. To see the materials for this project you need to be a member of Facebook.*



Diana Doyle writes:

I'd like to encourage fellow birders to participate in this year's "SeaBC Sea Bird Count." You can participate in November, December or January. Hitch a coastal or offshore ride with a sailing or fishing buddy, or count while chartering or taking a cruise.

This citizen science project, in its second year, is organized by a group of nine long-distance birding sailors from around the world, including Wendy Clarke, Diana Doyle, Brenda Free, Yvonne Katchor, Beth Leonard, Katharine Lowrie, Devi Sharp, Jeanne Socrates, and Dorothy Wadlow.

Last year's inaugural count spanned 100° of latitude, from Maine to Antarctica. The Caribbean 1500, Baja Ha-Ha, Salty Dog Rally, Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC), Seven Seas Cruising Association, Island Cruising Association, Ocean Cruising Club, and many other organizations have adopted the project and helped spread the word to their fleets.

This year we are encouraging participants to take digital photos of any seabirds. All data goes to Cornell Lab of Ornithology's eBird database ([www.ebird.org](http://www.ebird.org)).

An instruction/tally sheet and additional information are available on the community page at Facebook.com/Birding.Aboard (under SeaBC/Resources), or by direct PDF download at: <http://tinyurl.com/SeaBC-TallySheet>.

Please join the count in any way you can and contribute much-needed information about pelagic birds!

Diana Doyle  
St. Augustine, FL  
[www.birdingaboard.org](http://www.birdingaboard.org)

## Bird Club Now Has Facebook Page



A Facebook group for the club: <http://facebook.com/groups/cayugabirdclub> has been created. The group is intended to foster casual communication between club members. There are no strict rules about what is appropriate other than that content should be of interest to other members. It is good for posting photos, announcing events, or sharing news articles. Paul encourages everyone to join and contribute.

## Toucans, Aracaris and Rain

By Cyndy Tkachuck

Getting up at 4:30 a.m. five days a week is not high on my list, but the birds are already tweeting and bopping about looking for food. Richard and I must go to the botanical garden to raise the high nets and open and set the ground nets. Then, we wait and watch.

When we hear the low croaking of Keel-billed Toucans, we know that the Collared Aracaris are not far behind. The aracaris are the quest; but like all creatures in the wild, they have minds of their own and cannot be herded and coaxed into the nets. Why are we doing this? We are volunteers!

Together with a group of 10-12 young people, we are assisting graduate student Landon Jones who is working to determine the efficacy of Keel-billed Toucans and Collared Aracaris in disseminating seeds that will help regenerate tropical forest fragments in the fields and gardens of Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza (CATIE), located in Turrialba, Costa Rica. Since January of this year, Jones has been capturing the target species, attaching small radio transmitters on them, and tracking their movements as they forage among the large variety of trees and plants. Nineteen birds have been captured and released; we are trying to get one more Collared Aracari to complete the study group.

While Richard and I are concentrating on capturing the last bird, the rest of the volunteers are engaged in other projects, such as tracking the radio signals emanating from transmitters on the released birds, setting out seed traps, collecting plant specimens, and assisting another researcher with a bird banding project. We, too, have participated in some of the other work, but now our principal assignment is to monitor the BG (botanical garden) nets.

To date, approximately 40 volunteers from the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Australia have assisted with this project. Like Jones, we all sweat in the steamy heat and get soaked in torrential downpours to get the work done. When asked why, Jones, a fourth year graduate student at the University of Louisiana—Lafayette, replied: "It's Costa Rica; we're living the dream!" 



*Note: On the day before we left the project, we finally caught the last needed Collared Aracari. Landon Jones in photo with Cyndy and Richard.*

## Birds of Hurricane Sandy

By Ann Mitchell

Hurricane Sandy wreaked massive devastation along the Eastern coast the US. With its high winds, strong rains and devastating storm surge, it changed the physical features along the coast. Along with this, Sandy brought inland a number of unusual birds. In our area some were able to see the following: Leach's Storm Petrel, Parasitic Jaeger, Sabine's Gull, Ross's Gull, Snowy Egret, Red Phalarope, Northern Gannet, and Black-legged Kittiwake. There were 3 Cattle Egrets north of Montezuma, but I don't know if they were storm related. I think there were 3 different Sabine's Gulls, at least 2 Black-legged Kittiwakes. I don't know how many Leach's Storm Petrel were observed. The one I saw was being harassed by a Merlin. Thank goodness, the Merlin lost. When I first saw it, it was close to the east shore near Myers. Later, we found it on the west side of the lake, but still identifiable. A lot of kids from the Cornell bird club showed up and I got 3 of them on the petrel. There were at least 2 Parasitic Jaegers. I saw a juvenile and there was also an adult seen at Long Point.

All the sea birds are rare to this area. I have only seen jaegers and petrels on the east coast. Actually, some Leach's Storm Petrels nest on Egg Rock in Maine where I volunteered one spring. Once in awhile we see Snowy Egrets, but I think the one we saw was a storm bird. We also had another Laugh-



Leach's Storm Petrel

©Jay McGowan

ing Gull which could also have been a result from the storm. We did have a Red Phalarope last year at Montezuma, but I think the one we saw this year was storm related. Some of the younger folks saw hundreds of Brandt fly over. We normally have Brandt fly over, but the numbers were extremely high this year. 

## Field Trip Report: All day with the birds.

By Jay McGowan

Thirteen brave people joined me for a cold, wet, and windy trip up Cayuga Lake. Conditions were far from ideal, but we saw some good birds nonetheless. An early highlight came at Myers Point in the form of a 1st-cycle Thayer's Gull on the spit. It stood out immediately with frosted wingtips and overall small size, and we were able to get nice looks at it as it played with sticks in the water and sat on the spit. Other birds at Myers included Surf Scoter, Snow Bunting (two flying north), and a Dunlin (also flying north.) Lots of loons were moving, but not too many waterfowl.

Continuing from there, we then headed up the lake; but despite frequent stops and admirable perseverance, the strong winds proved too much and we found very few birds of interest on the lake. At Mud Lock, however, we found a Common Tern flying around and landing on buoys, and a large flock of 40+ Pine Siskins flew over.

The Visitor Center pool at Montezuma had a good variety of waterfowl. Also, as we arrived here I am fairly sure I heard a Common Redpoll call from somewhere out in the weeds, perhaps with a goldfinch flock we saw later. At Benning's Marsh, a large flock of Dunlin contained a White-rumped Sandpiper, but most of the group took off before we could get good looks. At least eight Wilson's Snipes were more cooperative in the back.

We made a quick stop to look at the three continuing Cattle Egrets at Goosehaven on Rt. 89, and then headed over to East Road. We quickly picked out five Ross's Geese in with several hundred Snow Geese, then at least three more Ross's in with the rest of the flock for a total of eight. We briefly had a Cackling Goose in with the Canadas but couldn't refind it for the group. A large group of Dunlin along the south part of Knox-Marsellus proved to contain at least seven White-Rumped Sandpipers when finally seen in decent light from Towpath, but sporadic and chilling rain made viewing very difficult. Sixteen Sandhill Cranes were foraging around here as well, as well as nine Tundra Swans, my first of the season.



Thayer's Gull breeds in the high arctic and normally winters around Hudson Bay and the west coast of North America. Occasionally they make it to our area.

Thanks again to everyone who came along, I hope the birds made up for the unpleasant weather.

Photos: © Jay McGowan



### Don't Forget to Renew

Don't let your Cayuga Bird Club membership lapse! Dues are \$15 per family (students, \$10).

Please fill out the form below and mail it with a check made out to "Cayuga Bird Club." Or see a club officer and pay them directly. Remember, the club newsletter is now only in electronic form. Please write your email address very carefully.

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Mail to:

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

You can now also pay by Paypal by using your credit card. Go to the Cayuga Bird Club website and fill in the form available. You do not have to be a member of Paypal to do this.

<http://www.cayugabirdclub.org/membership>

## “Fiscal cliff” has Consequences for Birds and Wildlife

By Candace Cornell

Conservation Action Committee

With the election behind us, President Obama and Congress must compromise to pass a budget immediately to avoid the “fiscal cliff” of budgetary gridlock threatening the country by year’s end. If Congress doesn’t pass a budget before December 31, a cascade of crippling budget cuts (sequestrations) will automatically sweep through *all* federal programs with a devastating effect on wildlife conservation. As the clock ticks toward the cliff, mere belt tightening will not be enough. But in our fiscal rush to arms, we must never lose sight of the crucial needs of birds and wildlife.



According to the September 14, 2012 draft outline of the Budget Control Act of 2011 ([http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/legislative\\_reports/stareport.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/assets/legislative_reports/stareport.pdf)), the automatic sequestrations will:

- End funding for bird and wildlife habitat protection and reclamation.
- Slash resources for the listing and recovery of endangered species.
- Curtail research on threats to endangered animals.
- Reduce migratory bird and wildlife law enforcement.
- Close many national wildlife refuges, forests, parks, and their visitor centers, ending their valuable public education and recreation programs.

If you have not already done so, please write to your Congressional representatives urging them to pass a more balanced budget that will not harm essential wildlife conservation programs.

Thanks you for speaking out for birds and other wildlife!

*Editor’s Note: Sometimes the link works, other times not. If you are having trouble, copy and paste the URL.*

### Minutes for the November 2012 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

President Linda Orkin welcomed everyone to the meeting on November 12 at 7:30 pm. When asked whether any newcomers would like to identify themselves, Ethan Kisler introduced himself as working on the Loon Watch program on Cayuga Lake. He reported that over 4,000 loons had been seen so far this fall. Other bird-worthy sightings for the past month were: the red-phase screech owl seen from inside Day Hall and the continuing Rufous Hummingbird which was reported to have been banded during the first weekend of November.

The next club meeting will be held on December 10 as Sandy Podulka shows slides and shares about her family’s vacation to Big Bend National Park and the Rio Frio Bat Cave near Concan, Texas. It was also noted that the “Birds of Paradise” documentary will be aired on the National Geographic channel at 10 p.m. on November 22.

Paul Anderson reported that there had been three field trips since the last meeting, as follows:

- North along Cayuga Lake, led by Ann Mitchell
- Stewart Park and points north, led by Susan Danskin
- All day trip, led by Jay McGowan (with highlight of Thayer’s Gull)

Steve and Sue Fast will lead a trip to Fair Haven, Lake Ontario on Nov. 17, while Kevin McGowan heads up the annual trek to Niagara Falls to look for gulls on Dec. 1 (members only trip).

Gary Kohlenburg will be leading a trip to Summerhill on Dec. 8. Check the website for details.

The Conservation Committee will be having its initial meeting on November 21. Anyone interested may join Candace Cornell and Linda Orkin (details should be available on the calendar).

Dave Nutter, Jane Graves, and Linda Orkin have been active in the quest to make improvements at Stewart Park. It is

hoped that the Cayuga Bird Club will explore the possibility of donating to various endeavors, including: signage (kiosk info booths); Renwick gateway and trails; and possibly native plantings. More information will be made available as plans continue.

Other points of business were made. Christmas Bird Count is coming up on January 1. Area leaders are being identified for New York's 114th year. A reminder was given to all members to visit and sign up on the Club Facebook page - "Cayuga Bird Club." Also remember that newsletter contributions should be emailed to editors Cyndy and Richard Tkachuck at [cbceditor1@gmail.com](mailto:cbceditor1@gmail.com).

Ton Schat pointed out that a broader study is being made of ANY birds exhibiting symptoms of Mycoplasma conjunctivitis, not just house finches. We are asked to report by calling the Ornithology Lab and asking for the appropriate people.

Carl Steckler read the Basin Checklist.

Our speaker, Dr. Scott Taylor, was self-introduced as holding a relatively new postdoctoral position at the Ornithology Lab (7 months), having completed studies at Guelph and Queens University in Canada. His presentation, entitled "Boobies, Upwellings, the Pacific Ocean and Mangoes: Thoughts from Adventures in Peru and Chile," entertained us with humorous recountings of 14-hour sea jaunts, the isolation of the guano islands, and memorable viewing of the Southern Cross, but also informed us about the fascinating ecology of the Humboldt Current upwelling and the guano islands. He shared his experiences of traveling to four islands off the coast of Peru in 2007 (and actually living on the last for two weeks) as well as travels to two additional islands off Chile in 2009. He spoke of his daily activities which included taking blood samples, paint marking birds, and equipping them with GPS for logging diving depths. He spoke of the incredibly short food chain of these islands: photo- and zooplankton, fish, birds, decomposers and ectoparasites along with the man-made addition of certain lizards. Plus, we were introduced to a short course on the history of guano extraction from the "Guano Age" (1840-80) to the present "Fishmeal Age."

Respectfully submitted,  
Colleen Richards

**Some jokes to tell your grandchildren.**

Q: Why didn't the bird need silverware?  
A: It was a spoonbill

Q: Why do humming birds hum?  
A: Because they don't know the words.

Q: What bird is present at every meal?  
A: The swallow.

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**Bob McGuire, (2015)**  
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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 via email the Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter monthly from September through June. Send newsletter submissions to Richard and Cyndy Tkachuck, 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](http://www.cayugabirdclub.org)