

Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter - December 2015

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Cayuga Bird Club

November 2015

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Cayuga Bird Club Meeting, December 14

Speakers: Bob McGuire and Wes Blauvelt



North to Alaska: In Search of Bird Songs

Join Bob and Wes as they drive 13,000 miles from Ithaca, NY, across the US and Canada to Alaska, cross the Arctic Circle, drive the Denali Highway, visit Nome, and then

Resurrection Bay on the Kenai Peninsula. Their intention is to view and record as many birds as possible. The talk will include photos of the birds (and mammals) and their habitats as well as many sound recordings.

Bob McGuire is a former president of the Cayuga Bird Club and Editor of *Birding The Cayuga Lake Basin*. An avid birder and sound recordist, Bob has contributed over 2000 recordings to the Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library. Wes Blauvelt is currently Vice President of the Cayuga Bird Club and has been fortunate to have traveled the world to find birds. Wes has recently taken up sound recording as he continues his pursuit of birds.

The meeting will be held at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. The evening will begin with cookies and conversation at 7:15 pm. Cayuga Bird Club business begins at 7:30 pm, followed by the speakers' presentation. All are welcome.

From the President

Hello Cayuga Bird Club Members,

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Calendar

Dec. 5-6 Niagara Falls Field Trip

led by Jay McGowan

Note: this overnight field trip is full

Dec. 12 Short-eared Owls Field Trip

led by Ann Mitchell,

Meet at Lab of O parking lot, 3:00 pm

Dec. 14 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

Lab of O, 7:30 pm

Speakers: Bob McGuire and Wes Blauvelt

North to Alaska: In Search of Bird Songs

Jan. 1 Christmas Bird Count,

12:01 am ~ 4:30 pm

Jan. 1 Christmas Bird Count Potluck

Dinner/Compilation, Lab of Ornithology, 6:00 pm

Jan. 11 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

Lab of O, 7:30 pm

Host: Kevin McGowan

Share Your Photos Night

See our [Web Calendar](#) for more events and field trips.



The calendar year is coming to a close, but there still is plenty of time to get outside and have the birding experience of your year! The birds coming to my fruit trees and feeders outside my window as I write this column remind me that birds are always out there

leading their lives. They're just waiting for us to discover something interesting. What is your most exciting birding experience so far this year?

I'm not sure what mine has been. I was fortunate enough to have some great birding opportunities on trips out-of-state for work and for pleasure. One exciting day in February, I had just finished up a sea watch on Pinos Point in Monterey, California where eBird's Brian Sullivan was showing me how to identify fly-by Black-vented Shearwaters and Rhinoceros Auklets. I made the off-hand comment to Brian that I had seen 499 species of birds in the lower 48 states. He asked if there was anything special I had not seen, and I let on that I had never seen a Surfbird. About ten minutes later, he was showing me a Surfbird among the waves crashing on the rocky point. That wasn't even the exciting part.

About an hour later, I was scoping sleeping groups of Sanderlings and Black-bellied Plovers on some rocks just off-shore when my scope found a bird that I had never seen before. My field guide was back in the car. So, I drew some quick drawings in my notebook and wrote these notes:

Medium-small shorebird. Smaller than Surfbird and the much larger Black-bellied Plover in same scope view. Plain gray (medium dark) above bleeding onto breast and flanks. White chin. Longish bill (2x as long as Surfbird), darkest at tip. Yellow legs like Surfbird. White from lores through eye, but with dark eye line. Dark-tipped primaries. Wings slightly long than tail. Overall body posture superficially similar to a standing dove.

Just in case you haven't guessed yet, it was my first ever Wandering Tattler, found all on my own. A picture taken through my scope – with the Surfbird and Black-bellied Plover in the same view – and sent to Brian Sullivan that night confirmed the identification. I ended the trip with 502 species seen in the U.S. (yes, including free-flying California Condors).

In early August I went back to the West Coast on a trip through

November

Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Minutes recorded by Becky Hansen are available at the CBC [website](#).

First-of-Year Birds Reported during November 2015 for the Cayuga Lake Basin

11/13 Franklin's Gull
11/15 Cave Swallow

2015 count to date: 281 species

Thanks to Dave Nutter for compiling these records for the club. Details are available on the [CBC website](#).

Special Monday Night Seminar

The Marriage of Art and Science: A One-of-a-Kind Mural of Birds

Monday, Dec 7,
7:30 pm Cornell Lab
of Ornithology

A spectacular 3,000 square-foot mural covering an entire wall of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Visitor Center is nearly complete. In this presentation, artist and founder of Ink Dwell studio

northern California and southern Oregon with my two boys. I saw several species new to me, but my favorite birding experiences involved my boys. My 12 year-old fell in love with American White Pelicans (and somebody's pet Emu that we saw near one of the three drive-through Redwoods we drove through). My 15 year-old let on that he enjoyed the bigger birds we were seeing, like the large numbers of Buteos in many of the irrigated agricultural fields. Given that we were seeing just about every possible color morph of Red-tailed and Swainson's Hawks, it was neat to listen to my boys sort them as svelte Swainson's and bulky Red-tails.

Near the end of our trip, we had the opportunity to stop in at Point Blue's banding station at Point Reyes. They had a recapture of a young male Anna's Hummingbird. It was only fitting that the guy who said he most enjoyed the bigger birds we were seeing got to release this bird that weighed-in just less than the weight of a nickel. Big smiles for little birds.

As you think about your favorite birding experiences from 2015, I hope anticipation is growing for the birds you'll see in early 2016, too. Please plan to participate in our Christmas Bird Count on January 1st. See the [article](#) in this newsletter for details about how you can take part.

May your holidays be merry and your birding fun,



Jane Kim will discuss her two-and-a-half-year process leading to the creation of this modern masterpiece. Her work showcases 271 species from all modern bird families and their prehistoric ancestors painted in exacting detail. This seminar is open to all.

[Share Your Photos Night, January 11](#)

Kevin McGowan will once again host the Cayuga Bird Club's annual "Share Your Photos Night" on January 11, 2016.

Club members can share a maximum of **five photos** during the 3 minutes you will have to take the stage. Send them by **January 8** to Kevin at kjm2@cornell.edu. [The Subject Line on the email MUST BE "Bird club photo submission Jan2016."](#) 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!

[Searching for Owls 11/7/2015](#)

by Wes Blauvelt

With five cars loaded with eager participants, the Cayuga Bird Club owl trip set off in search of four species: Barred, Great Horned, Eastern Screech and Northern Saw-whet Owls. We began with a brief stop at Sapsucker Woods for Barred Owl, but it was not to be found. Moving on to Dodge Road, our first owls of the night presented themselves. A **Great Horned Owl** offered hoots from a hedgerow along the fields to the northeast and after a little coaxing, an **Eastern Screech Owl** entertained us with a series of whinnies and trills. The Eastern Screech Owl was in a spruce forest along the edge of the road and could be observed through Suan Yong's infrared camera.

Departing Dodge Road, we traveled to Monkey Run Road but upon our arrival we were quickly run off by a rain shower. We decided to travel to Star Stanton Road, in part to wait out the rain but also in hopes of finding our first Barred Owl of the evening. This strategy was a partial success -- we out ran the rain -- but no Barred Owl. Suan scanned the forest along the road with his infrared camera for a possible owl but found only a rodent scampering through the underbrush.



Suan Hsi Yong

Our last stop of the night was the Hammond Hill Owl banding station (HHOWLS) operated by John Confer. For the past several years John has been banding Northern Saw-whet Owls at this location (see John's [report from HHOWLS in this newsletter](#)); it offered us the best opportunity to see these diminutive owls in the hand. Upon our arrival a net check was underway but after a brief visit with John we learned that no owls had been captured that evening. However, within minutes of our arrival the first **Northern Saw-whet Owl** of the night was netted-- it's all in the timing!

The entire group had an opportunity to watch John's team work with the owl: measuring its weight using an orange juice can, measuring the wing cord, examining the wing fluorescence to determine the age of the bird, taking a blood sample to be evaluated later for parasites, and banding the bird. Upon its release this hatch-year female provided photogenic poses before flying off into the night.

Stay in touch through our [Facebook](#) page and [Cayuga Bird Club Website!](#)



Facebook CBC Website

Our night ended with three of the four target owl species heard or observed. For some participants these species included new additions to their life lists.



Suan Hsi Yong

More images taken by Suan Yong, including infrared video of the Eastern Screech Owl, are available [here](#).



[Cayuga Bird Club Loon Watch](#)

by Wes Blauvelt

With temperatures hovering a few degrees above freezing and winds gusting from the NW at 20+ knots, conditions were perfect for a substantial loon flight on November 14. The 20+ Cayuga Bird Club members and observers who arrived at Taughannock State Park around dawn were not disappointed. Dividing into two watch stations, the traditional location at the confluence of Taughannock Creek with Cayuga Lake and another approximately 100 yards south along the lake shoreline, observations were started 15 minutes before sunrise (6:31 AM).

Over the course of the next two hours over two thousand **Common Loons** were observed -- plus one **Red-throated Loon**. Using 15 minute intervals, two distinct flights were observed. Birds from Cayuga Lake were presumed to comprise the first flight, with their numbers declining by 7:15 AM. A second flight, presumed from

Lake Ontario, began to arrive around 7:30 AM with numerous waves of 60 to 70 birds arriving from the NNE just below the cloud cover. This flight continued for approximately 45 minutes. A summary of the counts from the south watch station follows:

6:30 AM - 19

6:45 AM - 75

7:00 AM - 277

7:15 AM - 57

7:30 AM - 151

7:45 AM - 218

8:00 AM - 102

8:15 AM - 10

8:30 AM - 27

8:45 AM - 14

Count total = 950

The estimated count for the traditional location was approximately 1,200 Common Loons. One observer noted that there were too many birds to count! On that note, I would say it was a very successful Loon Watch.

Thanks to all who participated (and to the loons) and let's try to keep this great traditional alive in future years.

Short-Eared Owls Field Trip December 12

Ann Mitchell will lead a Cayuga Bird Club field trip to look for Short-eared Owls on Saturday, December 12. Meet at the Lab of Ornithology parking lot at 3:00 p.m. We will return at approximately 6:00 pm. Dress for the weather with layers of warm clothing.

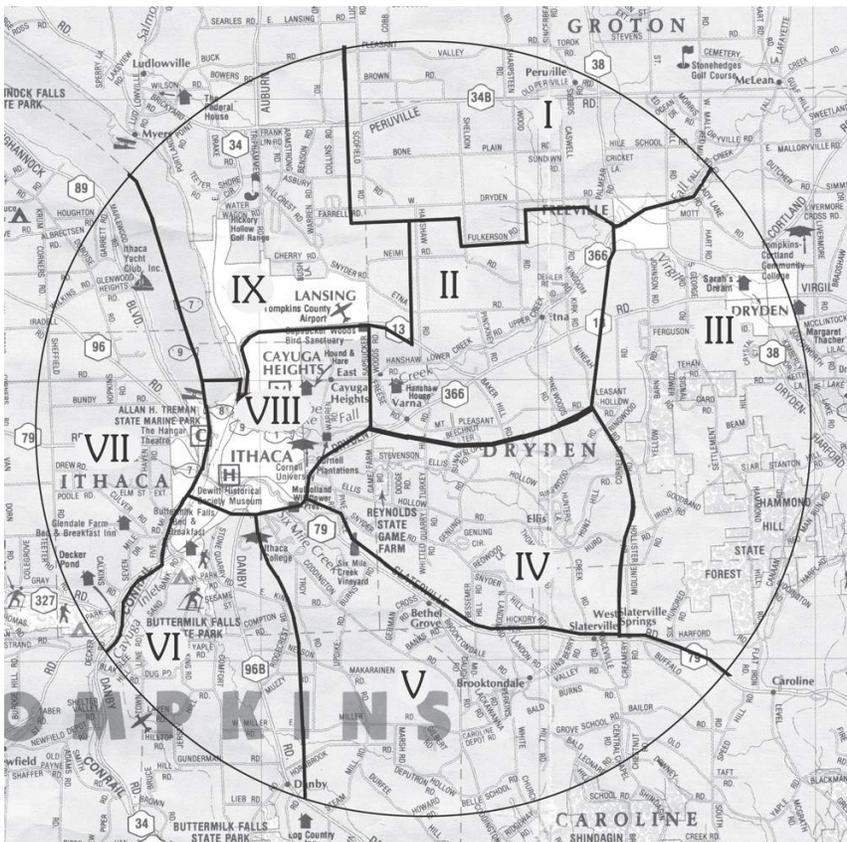
For additional information about the trip, contact Ann at annmitchell13@gmail.com or phone 607-220-8448. This field trip is open to all.

Annual Christmas Bird Count

January 1, 2016!

This year will be the 116th Christmas Bird Count of the Audubon Society, and the Cayuga Bird Club's 53rd consecutive year of participation! The Audubon Christmas Bird Count is held between

December 14 and January 5 each year. Once again, the Cayuga Bird Club will organize the Ithaca count on our traditional date of New Year's Day, January 1, which falls on a Friday this year. All club members as well as members of the public are encouraged to participate in this one-day count of birds in our 15 mile count circle.



If you would like more information or assistance in choosing a count area, or if you are a beginner and are concerned about identifying birds accurately, please get in touch with club President Jody Enck at 607-319-4216, or jwe4@cornell.edu. He will be happy to discuss count particulars and offer options for you. We are always hoping to inspire some first-time counters to participate, so please don't hesitate to be in touch if you are interested in learning more.

Within the Ithaca count circle, we have nine areas from which to choose, all with their own hotspots.

Count coordinators for these nine areas are listed below:

- Area I Colleen Richards clr82@juno.com
- Area II Bob McGuire bmcguire@clarityconnect.com
- Area III Marie Read mpr5@cornell.edu
- Area IV Laura Stenzler lms9@cornell.edu
- Area V Sandy Podulka sqp4@cornell.edu
- Area VI Asher Hockett veery715@gmail.com

Area VII Marty Schlabach m1s5@cornell.edu

Area VIII Lynn Leopold lynnbird58@gmail.com

Area IX Mark Chao markchao@imt.org

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 any one time. This is the same protocol as Project Feederwatch. Call the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at 607-254-2473 between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. (no later, please!) to report your totals to this year's club volunteer.

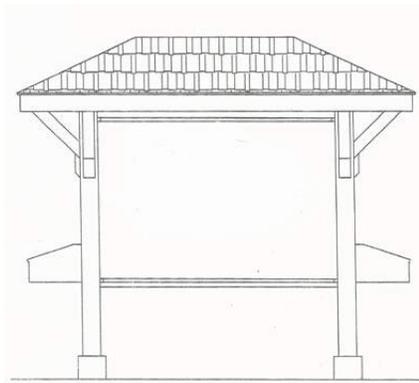
In addition to [count circles](#) throughout the United States, counts are conducted in Canada, the Caribbean, Mexico, Central America, Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, and the Pacific Islands. You can see results, view photos, and get more detailed information about this Audubon Citizen Science project [here](#).

Count participants are invited to come to the Johnson Center of the Lab of Ornithology on January 1 at 6:00 pm for a potluck supper that will start at 6:30 pm, followed by the compilation of sightings at 7:15 pm. Bring a dish to share and your own place settings and beverage. This is always a fun event -- to find out what has been seen during the day and to get to know other birders.

What will we find in Ithaca *this* January 1?

Salt Point Kiosk Proposal

by Donna Scott



The Friends of Salt Point (FOSP) plan to construct an educational kiosk for the Salt Point Natural Area in Lansing, and hold a dedication event late in the spring of 2016. The aim of the kiosk is to enhance the visitor experience and celebrate the natural and historical significance of this stunning lakeside destination. **The**

Friends are asking the Cayuga Bird Club to donate \$500 - \$1000 to pay for educational signage about the many birds of the area.

The kiosk, modeled after two that are located in the Erie Canal Heritage Park in the Town of Montezuma, NY, has an historic appeal and will be site-appropriate. It will serve as an unstaffed information center to educate visitors about the historic salt works that once operated on Salt Point and was the economic center of the community. It will also highlight the process of restoring the site to a natural area and **identify its present-day birds**, indigenous



plants, and wildlife. Finally, the kiosk will serve to communicate the usage rules for this public area. By working with the Lansing Historical Association and the Cayuga Bird Club, the kiosk will convey the site's historical value to the community and the abundant birdwatching opportunities possible at Salt Point.

The kiosk will be filled with professionally prepared signage, photographs, and paintings, conveying the historic significance of the site and educational information about the numerous birds and many indigenous plants and wildlife found in the natural area. Birds and bird habitat will be a key part of the kiosk messaging. For the specific content about birds, the FOSP will consult with local Cayuga Bird Club and Lab of Ornithology experts with regard to area birding information, photographs, and consultations on habitat improvement; information will touch on why the Cayuga Lake area is so special for providing habitat for many bird species.

Building the kiosk will cost \$4880 for materials, including a concrete pad, and labor by a reputable local contractor. Costs for educational signage will require additional funds estimated at \$1100. Acknowledgement of Cayuga Bird Club's involvement and monetary donation, along with the other donors to this project will be featured in a prominent location within the kiosk and through local news media press releases.

Besides Cayuga Bird Club, other donors include several private individuals (\$1500 so far), the Lansing Community Council (\$500), the Tompkins County Tourism Bureau (\$1500), with proposals submitted to the John Ben Snow Foundation and Cargill Corporation. The architect who designed the kiosk donated the plans free of charge to Friends of Salt Point, a \$700 value. Volunteers will paint the structure.

FOSP estimates that the Salt Point Natural Area averages a minimum of 100 visitors per day year round, with considerably more in the summer and fewer in the winter. An average of 35 volunteers come to our work days.



The FOSP Steering Committee includes two Cayuga Bird Club members (Candace Cornell and Donna Scott), two native plant experts, a NYSEG forester, the Director of the Lansing Parks and Recreation Department, the Park constable, and four Lansing residents. Robert Rieger is the Chairman of the FOSP, which holds regular monthly meetings and records meeting minutes which are filed at the Lansing Town Hall.

FOSP raises money with sales of Salt Point hats and through donations and grant proposals. Much in-kind work and materials (eg., many telephone poles and benches) have been donated by NYSEG and Cargill Corporations. FOSP frequently partners with other organizations and businesses, such as Lansing Historical Association, Kendal at Ithaca, Wild Ducks Unlimited, and the Plantsmen Nursery. Except for labor by Lansing Town Highway Department personnel, NO Lansing taxpayer funds have been used for any of this work.

Since Salt Point is of such interest to birders, FOSP hopes that Cayuga Bird Club will be a partner in this project. This proposal will be discussed at the next Cayuga Bird Club meeting, December 14, 2015.

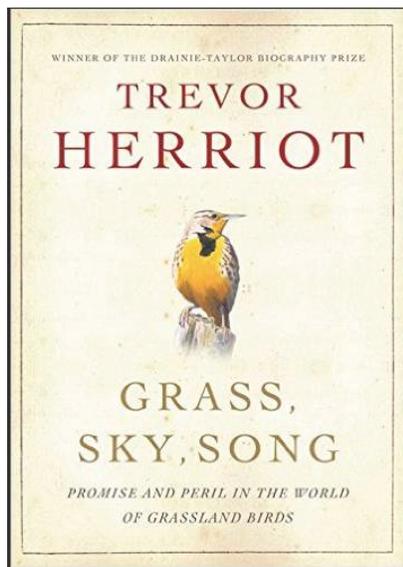
For more background on Salt Point and the recent changes there, see the [accompanying article](#) by Donna Scott in this newsletter.

Book Review:

'Grass, Sky, Song' by TREVOR HERRIOT

Reviewed by Bob McGuire

In preparation for a recent trip to the Great Plains to record the birds of the grasslands, I read Saskatchewan-based Trevor Herriot's book "Grass, Sky, Song". His lyrical, sometimes even spiritual description of the birds, their habitat, and their habits was the perfect introduction.



Here is a passage from early in the book in which he describes - no, defines - a songbird: “. . . a creature covered in appendages that gather and refract light like prisms, bringing more of its invisible spectrum to our eyes; that lives upon the air while the rest of us escape gravity only in dreams; that takes the wind into its throat and returns it as the signature music of the land”. And that is exactly what I was going out there

to record - the music of that land!

The book consists of a series of interlaced stories, arguments, and species profiles. His stories tell of life on the plains of southern Saskatchewan, from the days of the original natives and immense buffalo herds to the coming of the railroad which opened the floodgates to pioneer farming and cattle grazing. That was eventually followed by today's industrial-scale agriculture. He also relates how he became schooled in the natural history of the plains and anecdotes from his family's refuge on Cherry Lake.

The arguments are by now familiar to anyone who follows the news. Grasslands are some of our most endangered habitats, and the situation for most grassland birds is dire. About 80 percent of the birds are showing accelerated declines due to habitat loss as the prairie is plowed under and over-grazed, and fire is suppressed. Invasive species and shrubby growth moves in. Then we add toxins in the environment, West Nile disease, urban sprawl, mineral extraction and drought possibly brought on by climate change. But there is still some hope, and he relates conversations with scientists, and non-profit organizations, and even ranchers who are moving to reverse the trend.

Most chapters end with a modest species profile (Sprague's Pipit, Burrowing Owl, Greater Sage-Grouse, Upland Sandpiper, etc.) describing the bird, its role in the prairie habitat, and its current status.

This book could easily lead one to despair. After all, the problems faced by grassland birds have their roots deep in our own history and culture. The question I asked myself at the end of the book was, “Why not despair?” The answer came in the words I used here earlier to

describe the writing: “lyrical, sometimes even spiritual”. This is how Trevor expresses his hope for the future: *“If we were to stop pointing fingers at others, something else might happen. . . . There is a healing, gathering force in the grassland, and in all natural landscapes, that can bring us together in a circle of shared responsibility for one another and for the health of other beings.”*

He closes the book with this: *“I feel it as a pull from the centre of my body down to the grass, the weight of all that birds forgive in us, leaving behind, free of gravity, in the air that receives their songs, the simplest of messages: Replenish the earth and you shall be replenished as well.”*

"Grass, Sky, Song" by Trevor Herriot, 2009, HarperCollins

You can listen to a dawn chorus of grassland birds recorded by Bob McGuire in Saskatchewan [here](#).



Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan. Photo by Bob McGuire

You may also be interested in Trevor Herriot's [blog](#) about the Northern Great Plains.

Fall 2015 Summary For HHOWLS (Hammond Hill Owl Station)

by John Confer

We captured 45 different owls this fall, 44 Northern Saw-whet Owls and one Eastern Screech Owl. Of these, 12 (~25%) were Hatch Year (HY) birds. Three years ago we had 80% HY birds in the year when we caught 104 owls. This year's low proportion of HY birds reflects a year with low reproductive success for the breeding range that provides migrants to us.

We had a large number of highly improbable coincidences that I wouldn't even have the nerve to claim, except all of them were observed by club members, including Bob McGuire and Wes Blauvelt and several others among the more than 25 observers who came out to help.

First, we captured six owls that had been banded elsewhere. That is, 16% of our birds, a truly remarkable proportion. Capturing previously banded birds is a matter of luck, not skill. John and Sue Gregoire who band near Watkins Glen captured a few more owls this year than we did, but none of theirs were banded.

Second, on 14 October, we captured two owls that were previously captured at HHOWLS. Both of these owls were captured on 4 November, **2013**. Recapturing one of your own banded birds is rare, recapturing two is rarer, recapturing two on the same night is even rarer, and recapturing two on the same night that were originally banded on the same night two years ago is – well, you got the idea.

Third, we captured an owl that was originally banded in southern Indiana. On the night of the recapture, we had a visitor from Indiana who had visited the very same original banding station. The odds of this plus the other coincidences is about equal to the odds of winning the Lotto Jackpot, or probably even smaller. Look at these free thrills that come our way.

This year we started to take small blood samples to examine for blood parasites. We learned how to make good blood smears and are now learning how to identify the parasites in the blood smears. So far, it appears we may have a lower rate of infection than other studies of migrant saw-whet owls but definitely have infection by *Leucocytozoon* and *Haemoproteus*, two protozoans that have part of their life cycle inside red blood cells of the host species.

As always, the banding is so much more enjoyable with the grand company that helps do the banding. Perhaps you'll continue or offer to become assistant banders next year.

Hoot, hoot,
John Confer 607-539-6308

Previously banded Northern Saw-whet Owls that were

recaptured fall 2015 at Hammond Hill Owl Station

<u>Band #</u>	<u>Recapture Date</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Original Banding</u>
<u>1014-76159</u>	<u>10/17/15</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Not yet known</u>
<u>0924-24386</u>	<u>10/20/15</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>11/11/2014, Somerset Co, PA</u>
<u>1014-26165</u>	<u>10/25/15</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>11/03/2013, Marion Co, WV</u>
<u>1014-79045</u>	<u>10/25/15</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>10/22/2010, Monroe Co, PA</u>
<u>0924-52614</u>	<u>10/27/15</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>11/04/2012, Brown Co, IN</u>
<u>0924-55213</u>	<u>10/30/15</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>11/09/2009, Potter Co, PA</u>
<u>1014-54627</u>	<u>10/14/15</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>9/28/2013 and 4 more times including 11/4/2013, HHOWLS, Tompkins Co, NY</u>
<u>1014-54667</u>	<u>10/14/15</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>11/4/2013, HHOWLS, Tompkins Co, NY</u>



The Transformation of Salt Point

by Donna Scott

For the past three years, Friends of Salt Point (FOSP), a Lansing volunteer group, and affiliated volunteers from the Town and both NYSEG and Cargill Corporations have done a great deal of work to help Mother Nature create a natural area and bird habitat at Salt Point in Lansing.

Salt Point is a New York State Department of Environmental

Conservation (DEC)-owned piece of land across Salmon Creek from Lansing's Myers Park. Both Salt Point and Myers Park are part of the delta of Salmon Creek which runs between them into Cayuga Lake (Salmon Creek is itself a unique survivor stream of pre-glacial eras). See <http://www.lansingrec.com/visit-salt-point> The DEC had long ago given the management of Salt Point over to the Town of Lansing, but not much was done with it for years, except to let it run amok – with motorized mayhem, neer-do-wells, litterers, and with re-growth of plants and trees, some invasive.

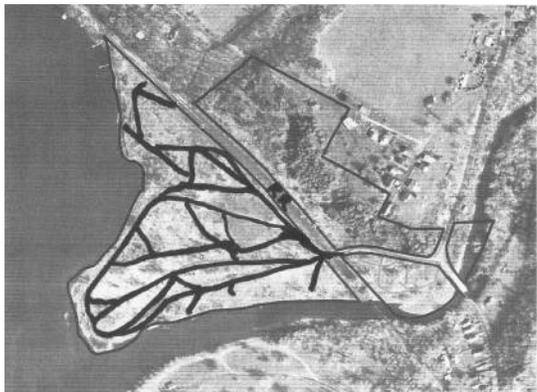
Salt Point juts out into Cayuga Lake at one of the only shallow-water refuges for birds of all sorts on the east side of this long, deep, steep-sided Finger Lake. It is

the site of a former early 1900s table salt processing factory, the building of which burned and collapsed in the 1960s; much of the debris was carted away, but some was used as fill



onsite. Since then Salt Point has slowly been reclaimed by Nature and until three years ago, it did provide sort of a refuge for birds in that it had a lot of grown-up bushes and trees and little mowing was done. Bird watchers did go there to observe ducks, shorebirds, and many song birds. But Salt Point was also ungoverned and unsupervised and became a rather dangerous place for pedestrians and birdwatchers because motor vehicles cut many hot-rod paths through a lot of the terrain.

Illegal activities, under-aged drinking and drunkenness, and drug deals were a big problem, as was lots of noise and litter and speeding vehicles on this moderately-sized parcel of land. Indeed, it became



known as “UC Point” after the popular Utica Club beer. It was certainly not a serene, quiet place to walk with ones friends or family and enjoy birds and nature.

Two years ago the Town of Lansing Board members, with much

community input, labor, and support in kind and in dollars, made plans to turn Salt Point into a natural area in which people could safely walk. They used huge concrete rectangles to block much of the Salt Point area from motorized vehicles, established a meadow area, as well as shrubby areas with bushes and trees, and established a few defined, safe walking paths.

Many native plants, bushes and trees were and are being planted, a few simple "Leopold" benches made of locust wood were placed along the trails and by the lake shore, several baffled bird nest boxes were erected



(thanks to Robyn Bailey and others), and a tall telephone pole topped by an Osprey nest platform was installed near the lake through the cooperation of the Town and the NYS Electric and Gas Company.

Soon, a family of Ospreys took over the nest box and later they fledged 3 chicks and did so in two subsequent years.



Birders and non-birders alike were enthralled watching the progress of the Osprey family! Bluebirds and Tree Swallows have nested in some of the baffled nest boxes that were erected in

the meadow area. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Warblers, Vireos, Orioles, Kingfishers, Green and Great Blue Herons, many ducks, grebes, and Coots, an occasional Eagle and other bird species use the area. A limited mowing plan is in place. Signage has been created to inform people about dog walking rules and the need to "carry in and carry out" personal food, garbage and other waste. Nearby residents voluntarily pick up litter each week. A local Veterinary Clinic donated a station that provides plastic bags and a receptacle for dog waste. An Osprey blog by Candace Cornell and other information, including the history of Salt Point, is posted at <http://www.lansingrec.com/parks/salt-point>.



Salt Point in three years has become a serene, quiet place to walk and contemplate birds, nature, and beautiful Cayuga Lake, and a place which gives the birds and other wildlife a more natural and mostly undisturbed place

to live. Compromise is always necessary with these kinds of changes in a community and its culture, and one part of Salt Point was left accessible to motor vehicles; motorists can drive very near the north shore, and a few picnic tables were provided for that area, which also includes a non-motorized-boat launch area. Also, since it is a NYS DEC holding, deer and waterfowl hunting are allowed in Fall. The Friends of Salt Point, in an effort to maintain and build community support for what has been done at Salt Point (please realize that the political climate of Lansing is not like that of Ithaca), plans and hosts regular evening programs on topics of local interest related to Salt Point and the lake.

This project has been in the hearts and minds of many birders and nature lovers for years and the time and political climate was finally right for it to happen. Many community members, corporate volunteers, and some Town of Lansing employees have worked hard to make Salt Point a lovely, peaceful and growing natural area and it has happened in just three years!

Help Wanted for NYSDEC Short-Eared Owl

Surveys

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Region 8 Wildlife Office is looking for volunteers to assist with wintering raptor surveys. The species of greatest interest is the short-eared owl, a state endangered species, but all raptor observations are important and will be documented. From these surveys, we hope to learn more about wintering population sizes, movement patterns, and the factors that influence winter habitat choice. The findings of this study will ultimately be applied toward developing a conservation plan for this species.

Surveys will be conducted from ½ hour before sunset to ½ hour after, and we meet before and after each survey to coordinate efforts and talk about our observations. This work does involve lots of standing out in cold weather, but I hope that the excitement of seeing raptors (and some provided snacks) will help to insulate us!

For those interested, there are two meeting locations to coordinate efforts before and after each outing:

1. Region 8 NYSDEC Office, 6274 East Avon-Lima Road, Avon, NY 14414
2. Ulysses Philomathic Library, 74 East Main Street, Trumansburg, NY 14886

Our tentative survey schedule is as follows:

Avon Area: December 1, 15, 29; January 12 & 26; February 9 & 23; March 8 & 22; April 5 & 19.

Trumansburg Area: December 3 & 17; January 14 & 28; February 11 & 25; March 10 & 24; April 7 & 21.

Our first few meetings/surveys will be from about 3:15 PM to 6:00 PM, but this will start to change along with the sunset time. Please let me know if you have any questions or are interested in coming out for surveys. Whether you can participate for the entire season or for only a single evening, we would greatly appreciate your assistance!

Thank you,
Christina Hoh
Region 8 Bureau of Wildlife
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
6274 East Avon-Lima Road
Avon, NY 14414-9519
(585) 226-5383
christina.hoh@dec.ny.gov

Cayuga Bird Club

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. 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. [Online payment option](#) is available at the Cayuga Bird Club website.

Members receive via email the monthly Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter, from September through June. Newsletter submissions may be sent to Diane Morton, cbceditor1@gmail.com. Of particular interest are articles about local bird sightings, bird behavior, or birding hot spots, as well as book reviews, original poetry, art, and photos.

Cayuga Bird Club Officer Contact Information is available on the [Cayuga Bird Club website](#).

Chickadee illustration in masthead by Karen Allaben-Confer



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