



Cayuga Bird Club

December 2016

In This Issue:

[Cayuga Bird Club Meeting, December 12](#)

Speaker: David Winkler
Tiny Solar Tags and Their Future in Following Bird Movements

[From the President](#)

Jody Enck

[Calendar](#)

[Cayuga Basin First Records](#)

[CLO Seminar: *Cat Wars*](#)

Speaker: Peter Marra

[DEC Winter Raptor Surveys](#)

[Short-eared Owls Field Trip - Dec 10](#)

[Christmas Bird Count - Jan 1](#)

[Loon Watch Report](#)

Wes Blauvelt

Cayuga Bird Club Meeting, December 12

Speaker: David Winkler

Pushing the Limits for Tag Size and Life-Span: Tiny Solar Tags and Their Future in Following Bird Movements



Most birds are very small, and one of the standing engineering challenges for bird-tagging is developing useful devices that are less than 1 g in mass. The TABER (Technology for Animal Biology and Environmental Research) group has achieved this by developing a family of tags that have no battery: they rely entirely on a solar

cell for the energy necessary to drive digitally encoded radio transmissions from the tags. Lacking a battery, they should remain functional longer than the birds on which they are placed are expected to live. This has allowed production of "life-time" tags weighing 0.4 to 0.7 g that transmit a distinctive ID code every second or so whenever they are in sunlight. These tags are already opening up some very interesting new facets and possibilities in monitoring the movements of passerine

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Calendar

Dec. 5 Tibetan Lama Presentation on Birds, Nature, Art
Noon, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Dec. 5 CLO Seminar, 7:30 pm
Cat Wars: The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer
Speaker: Peter Marra

Dr. Winkler is a professor in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell. He first came to Cornell in 1985 as a lecturer after obtaining his Ph.D. in 1983 at U. C. Berkeley while working with Frank Pitelka. In 1984, he was a Thord-Gray and Fulbright Fellow at the University of Gothenburg Sweden with Malte Andersson and in 1985 he attended Oxford University in England as a NATO Postdoctoral Fellow with John Krebs. From 1986-1988, he was a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow in environmental biology with Paul

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Dec. 10 Cayuga Bird Club Field trip -
Short-eared Owls

3:00 - 6:00 pm

Leader: Ann Mitchell

Meet at Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Dec. 12 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting,
7:30 pm

*Tiny Solar Tags and Their Future in
Following Bird Movements*

Speaker: David Winkler

Cornell Lab of Ornithology

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. 9 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting,
7:30 pm

Share Your Photos Night

Host: Kevin McGowan

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

First-of-Year Birds Reported during November 2016 for the Cayuga Lake Basin

Listed below are Cayuga Lake Basin
first arrivals reported during the last
month.

Oct. 29 Evening Grosbeak

Nov. 4 Cattle Egret

2016 count to date: 273 species

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

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

Sherman. In 1988, Dr. Winkler joined the Cornell faculty in Ecology and Systematics, later renamed the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology.

The meeting will be held at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Doors open at 7:00 pm and there will be cookies and conversation starting at 7:15. Bird club business begins at 7:30 pm followed by the presentation. All are welcome.

From the President

Jody Enck



Hello Cayuga Bird Club Members,

December is an exciting time in the birding year. Those of us who enjoy watching the flurry of bird activity at our backyard feeders can enjoy birds from the comfort of our own homes. Waterfowl numbers have been building steadily on Cayuga Lake and those of us who enjoy finding uncommon or wayward species of ducks, gulls, or other water-loving birds can feed our need for sense of discovery by checking through those flocks. And, as some of our club members recently reported, one can find lingering birds that might be wishing they had headed south on migration with most of their species.

Some of our members are busy scouring the Cayuga Lake Basin to add a couple more species to their year list. Many are looking forward to the beginning of a new year and all the anticipation and excitement that a new beginning can bring to their birding. Most of us also look forward to participating in the Christmas Bird Count on New Year's Day. Please see the [article in this newsletter](#) for more details about how you can participate.

This December is especially exciting for me because I want to welcome some new readers of our Club newsletter. Our Club has dozens of new friends among the 7 main bird clubs in Honduras. While I was in Honduras from mid-October through mid-November, I was able to meet with members of six of those clubs (plus members of the school club, The Hummingbirds) to discuss the idea of developing a network of sister bird clubs between the U.S. and Central America. This idea was met with great enthusiasm by the clubs there. I'll write more soon in the

Tibetan Lama Presentation on Birds, Nature, and Art

December 5, noon, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Tashi Sangpo has crisscrossed the Tibetan plateau, documenting the life history of birds and creating more than 400 unique illustrations of birds and plants. Known to his community as the "The Bird Lama," Tashi Sangpo founded the Nyanpo Yurtse Environment Protection Association, a group dedicated to conservation and public education. He is passionate about helping the next generation understand and care for the environment.

Cat Wars: The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer

December 5, 7:30 pm, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Peter Marra, Director of the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center, will talk about the threats free-ranging cats pose to biodiversity and public health throughout the world and propose possible solutions to this thorny problem. Marra is the author of a new book called *Cat Wars: The Devastating Consequences of a Cuddly Killer* and says mounting scientific evidence confirms that, in the United States alone, free-ranging cats are killing birds and other

newsletter about this emerging relationship. Please let me know if you want to be involved directly in building this network.

For now, please welcome readers of this newsletter from these bird clubs in Honduras:

Club Las Tanunas (named for the Lesser Roadrunner) in the western town of Gracias.

Club Hummingbirds, which is a group of high school students associated with Las Tanunas.

Club Cotinga (named for the Lovey Cotinga) in the north coast city of La Ceiba.

Club Clorofonia (named for Blue-crowned Chlorophonia) in the Lake Yojoa area.

Club Los Jilgueros (named for the Slate-colored Solitaire) in the southwestern town of Marcala.

Club Los Zorzales (named after Clay-colored Thrush) in the northwestern city of San Pedro Sula.

Club Los Alzacuanes (named for Swainson Hawks) in the capital city of Tegucigalpa.

Club Las Aguilas in Catacamas in eastern Honduras.

As we welcome these new friends into our small circle of birding partners, I hope each of you reaches out to your friends and neighbors to encourage them to become members of our Club. The Cayuga Bird Club is a great organization made up of wonderful people. Let's add to the fun!

Good birding!



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signing.

Admission is free and open to the public. This seminar will also be streamed at <http://dl.allaboutbirds.org/cornelllab-monday-night-seminars>.

Short-eared Owl Survey Volunteers Needed

Short-eared Owls Field Trip - December 10

Ann Mitchell will lead a Cayuga Bird Club field trip to look for Short-eared Owls on Saturday, December 10. 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

It is almost time for the 2015-2016 short-eared owl survey season! The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Region 8 Wildlife Office is looking for volunteers to assist with wintering raptor surveys near Trumansburg. 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 the excitement of seeing raptors (and some provided snacks) will help to insulate us!

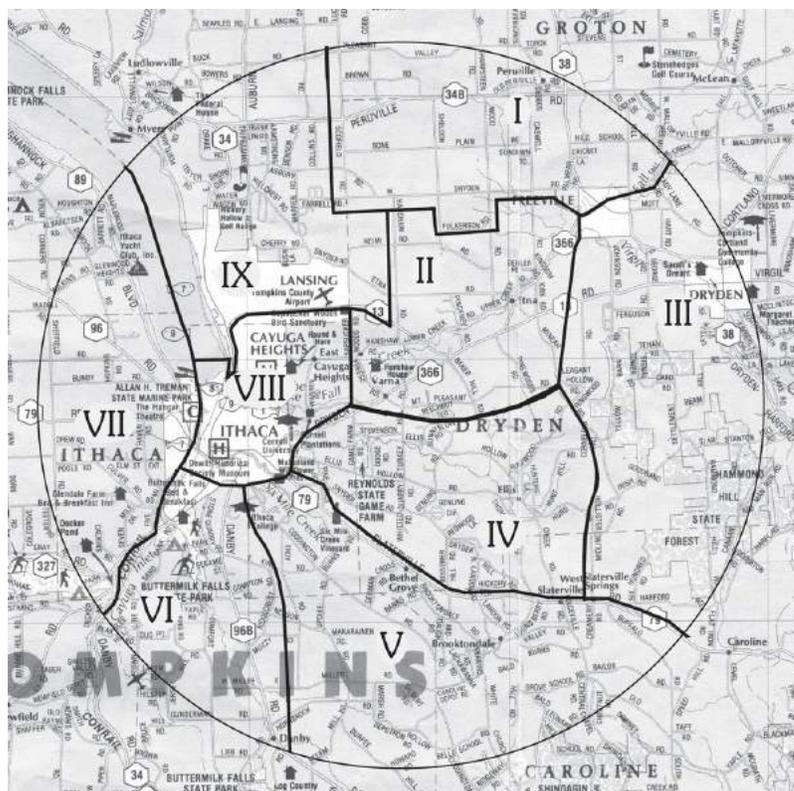
We will meet at the Ulysses Philomathic Library, 74 East Main Street, Trumansburg. Survey sites are usually within a 20-minute drive of our meeting location.

Trumansburg Area Meeting/Survey dates will be: December 8 & 22; January 5 & 19; February 2 & 16; March 2, 16 & 30; April 13 & 27.

at annmitchell13@gmail.com or phone [607-220-8448](tel:607-220-8448). This field trip is open to all.

Annual Christmas Bird Count - January 1, 2017!

This year will be the 117th Christmas Bird Count of the Audubon Society, and the Cayuga Bird Club's 54th 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 Sunday 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.



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this will start to change along with the sunset. Please email christina.hoh@dec.ny.gov if you'd like more information or would like to get involved with our surveys this winter. Whether you can participate for the entire season or for only a single evening, we would greatly appreciate your assistance!

identifying birds accurately, please get in touch with club President Jody Enck at [607-319-4216](tel: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. Alternatively, you may count birds in your yard and report numbers to coordinator Donna

Thank you,
Christina Hoh

Scott (see below).

Coordinators for the nine count 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 sgp4@cornell.edu
 Area VI Asher Hockett veery715@gmail.com
 Area VII Josh Snodgrass cedarshiva@gmail.com
 Area VIII TBD
 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 254-2473 between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. (no later, please!) to report your totals to Donna Scott.

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.

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What will we find in Alaska this January 1?

Loon Watch 2016 Report

Wes Blauvelt



What a difference a year makes! Last year on November 14, 2015, the Cayuga Bird Club Loon Watch recorded over 2,000 loons migrating in two flights from Cayuga Lake and Lake Ontario. This year on November 13, 2016, the CBC Loon Watch recorded a total of 18 **Common Loons** in presumed migratory flight. However, many of these loons did not give the impression that they had committed to migration and may only have been repositioning on the lake rather than starting a flight south. I believe this behavior and the low flight counts may have been related to wind conditions. There were very light winds on November 13th, with no strong tailwind or downwind conditions to help propel a flight. Under more ideal conditions a strong tailwind can assist Common Loons attain flight speeds of 60+ mph. At these speeds, documented flights of 300 to 600 miles in a 24-hour period have been reported and a loon could easily reach the Atlantic Coast from Lake Ontario in 3 - 4 hours.

Throughout the morning, Common Loons were observed on the surface of the lake, with rafts of 25 or more birds seen at several different locations including the cove between Taughannock Park and the Camp Barton Boy Scout camp. These loons appeared to be actively feeding and continuing to stage in preparation for a flight. Other birds observed during the watch

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[included Ring-Billed, Herring and Black-backed Gulls, Mergansers, Goldeneyes, and Kinglets](#)
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Scoter that was flying north along the far shore of the lake.

So how do these one day counts compare with past observations?

Starting in the early 1990's Bill Evans, Bob Meade and others initiated the Loon Watch at Taughannock State Park. The count was conducted from mid-October until the end of November and annual counts as reported on the CBC website ranged from a low of 2,990 (2002) to a high of 13,250 (1995). No similar counts

have been reported in the past two years. And no comparison can be made between the early counts of Evans, Meade et al. and the most recent watch data collected by CBC members. However, I would hope that in future years the CBC will continue to conduct at a minimum a one day Loon Watch and perhaps someday a hardy soul will step forward to revive the tradition of the mid-October thru November Loon Watch.



[Nov 13 Field Trip Report - Hotspots along the Lake](#)

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Following on the heels of the morning's loon watch at Taughannock, I was joined by seven folks for an extended drive up the lake. This is a great time to go looking for waterfowl, and the warm, sunny weather was kind to us.

From the shore at Stewart Park we noted two distant **Long-tailed Ducks**, several **Hooded Mergansers**, a single **Lesser Scaup**, and one of what I hope will be over-wintering **Double-crested Cormorants**. Not surprisingly, given the Indian Summer

conditions, a **Carolina Wren** serenaded us from back by the Youth Bureau.

At Myers we checked Ladoga and the point, and came up with a group of 5 **White-winged Scoters**, 4 **Common Loons**, a **Red-necked Grebe**, and a pair of chattering **Belted Kingfishers**.

Long Point did not disappoint! We encountered two **Black Scoters**, some 20 Loons, and a distant, probable, Red-necked Grebe. A little farther north, in the bay at Aurora, we found the expected **Horned Grebes** (7), our first **Common Goldeneye** of the fall season, and another 80 Common Loons.

At Mill Pond in Union Springs we added **Gadwall**, **Redhead**, **American Wigeon**, and **Bufflehead** for the day. And from the overlook at Frontenac park we picked out a distant **Bonaparte's Gull** on the water. Eventually the bird took off and gave us a moment of excitement by showing really dark underwings (hallmark of Little Gull). That was until we realized that the entire underbody of the gull was dark, the result of simply being in shadow.

We drove the wildlife drive at the refuge, spending time picking through the thousands of ducks, coots, and grebes. There we added **Black Duck**, **Canvasback**, **Greater Scaup**, **Ring-necked Duck**, **Ruddy Duck**, **Northern Pintail**, **Green-winged Teal**, **Northern Shoveler**, **American Coot**, and **Pied-billed Grebe**. There were a couple of swans at the back of the main pool which we never got good looks at - most likely Trumpeters.

We finished the trip with a stop along Rt 89 at Goose Haven to observe two of the **Cattle Egrets** that had been hanging out with the cattle for the past week or so.


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Red-necked Grebe photo by Suan Yong

Cayuga Bird Club

***Educating and inspiring the birding community of the Cayuga
Lake Basin and Central New York since 1914***

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. Payment may be made via Paypal at cayugabirdclub.org or by mailing a check to Cayuga Bird Club, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca NY 14850.

Please include your email address (or addresses for family memberships) with your membership application to receive the club newsletter.

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, birding hot spots, book reviews, and 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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