



Cayuga Bird Club

December 2017

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Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

December 11, 2017

Patagonia, Argentina: A naturalist's paradise!

Or From Puerto Madryn to Esquel: Notes on the Natural History of Patagonia



Speaker: Leonardo Campagna, PhD

Description: Leo writes: "My experiences growing up in Patagonia have shaped me as a biologist and I will share some aspects of the Natural History of this exciting and diverse area. I was born in Argentina and raised between Patagonia (Argentina) and Santa Cruz (California). These two very different places were chosen by my parents, and by each of the two species of elephant seals in the world - Southern and Northern, since Elephant seals are my father's main study system!"

The meeting will be held at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Doors open at 7:00 pm with 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

Wes Blauvelt

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Calendar

Dec. 11 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

7:30 pm, Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Speaker: Leonardo Campagna, PhD
Patagonia, Argentina. A naturalists paradise!

Dec. 16 Short-eared Owls Field Trip

Meet at Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 3:00 - 6:00 pm
Leader: Ann Mitchell

Jan.1 Christmas Bird Count

Jan.1 Christmas Bird Count Compilation Dinner

Dish-to-pass Supper at Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Jan. 8 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

7:30 pm, Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Share Your Photos Night

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

Minutes

of the November 13, 2017
Cayuga Bird Club meeting are
[available](#) on the Cayuga Bird
Club website.

Short-eared Owl Field Trip December 16

Join **Ann Mitchell** on a field trip to look for **Short-eared Owls** on Saturday, December 16. **Meet at the Cornell Lab parking lot at 3:00 pm** for carpooling. We hope to be back at about 6:00 pm. Dress warmly for standing in the cold. Call or email Ann at (607)220-8448 or annmitchell13@gmail.com if you have



The Cayuga Bird Club has a long tradition of participating in the Christmas Bird Count sponsored by the National Audubon Society. Originally conceived by

ornithologist Frank M. Chapman, the count was a response to the growing conservation movement of the early 20th century and a counterpoint to the holiday tradition of “Side Hunts” when parties were organized to see how many birds could be shot in a day’s time.

The first Christmas Bird Count took place on December 25, 1900, making this the 118th year of the count which now takes place throughout North America. With our 2018 count, the Cayuga Bird Club will have participated in this tradition for 55 consecutive years. The count period runs from December 14th through January 5th and for many years New Year’s Day has been the Cayuga Bird Club’s count day. January 1, 2018 will be our count day this season... another tradition.

The count circle is based upon a methodology originally developed by the National Audubon Society. It consists of a 15-mile diameter encircling a central point. This method can produce multiple count areas for the survey, but there is no required minimum or maximum number of areas. The Cayuga Bird Club count circle is centered upon the City of Ithaca, extending into the surrounding hills, including Danby to the South, Dryden to the Northeast, Peruville to the North and West Hill to the West. Our tradition has been to divide the count circle into nine areas and to deploy survey teams and individuals into each of the areas throughout the day to count as many birds of each species present. Cayuga Lake and its shoreline are divided into three of these areas, extending from Myers Point on the east shore to Maplewood Point on the west shore.

When Frank Chapman organized the first count, its purpose was to count birds rather than hunt them.

questions. See you there!

These field trips are open to all. Please check the [Cayuga Bird Club calendar](#) for updates in case there are date or time changes for these or any other field trips.

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

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

Nov. 7 Pacific Loon

Nov. 16 Red Phalarope

2017 total count through September: 276 species

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

Migration Seminar at Ithaca College

Speaker: David La Puma, Director, Cape May Bird Observatory

Title: *Keeping our finger on the pulse of migration for the last 40 years*

When: Thursday, December 7, 2017, 4:00 pm

Where: Ithaca College, Center for Natural Science, Room 112

Reception, First Floor Lobby, 3:45 pm
Open to the public

And as time went by the annual counts began to provide valuable data on the health of bird populations across the continent. This data also helped to inform the National Audubon Society as its conservation action initiatives developed and matured, thus another tradition was born — the collection of data for the purpose of measuring bird health and guiding the development of conservation policies to protect them.

For several years there has been a concern that the data collected during our count was not as accurate as it could be. Specifically, the ability to coordinate the data collected on birds “in and over” Cayuga Lake from Sections VII, VIII and IX has been problematic. Efforts to coordinate counts from these areas throughout the count day and during the evening compilation have been challenging. Concern for capturing accurate data on counts and species, without duplications has been the primary concern. Additionally, the timing of our count day coincides with the waterfowl and game bird hunting season, which runs from December 26th through January 14th in our region, contributing another challenge to an accurate and comprehensive recording of observed birds.

At our December meeting I will set aside time for a discussion of this concern. I have asked two of our club members who are familiar with the challenges of capturing accurate “lake bird” counts to speak to the issue. It is my hope that we can have an open and productive discussion on the topic and set a path to finding a solution that can be implemented for the 2019 Christmas Bird Count. While we have many traditions associated with the Christmas Bird Count, I believe that our goal should be to produce the most accurate and useful data to use in our continuing advocacy for birds.

My best wishes to everyone for a safe and joyous holiday season.



Christmas Bird Count



Red-headed Woodpecker in Ithaca!

Suan Yong

On the morning of November 12, I decided to explore Palmer Woods (for only the second time ever in my 13 years in Ithaca). After watching a flock of bluebirds working on some berries, I followed a Pileated Woodpecker into the woods, where it was being harassed by a smaller bird. My binoculars revealed it to be a Red-Headed Woodpecker. The pileated moved around from tree to tree as the red-headed continued dive-bombing it until it eventually left. The red-headed then flew to the end of a dead branch which evidently served as its workbench. Here it shelled and split acorns and carried the pieces to be stashed into the bark of a nearby white oak tree.



I watched it continue shelling and

This year will be the 118th Christmas Bird Count of the Audubon Society, and the Cayuga Bird Club's 55th consecutive year of participation! Once again, we will organize the Ithaca count on our traditional date of New Year's Day, January 1, which falls on Monday in 2018. 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. Within the Ithaca count circle, there are nine areas from which to choose, each with their own hotspots. Alternatively, you may count birds in your yard and report those numbers to coordinator Donna 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 Lynn Leopold, lynnbird58@yahoo.com

Area IX Mark Chao, markchao@imt.org

stashing for about an hour, interrupted a few times by forays to shoo off on-looking blue jays. Other observers have seen the bird accumulate acorns onto the workbench. The bird clearly intends to spend the winter in the area.

If you'd like to see this bird, you can look for it in the northwest corner of Palmer Woods on the Cornell Campus. From the Cornell "A" parking lot, walk north up the hill to the clearing at the top, then walk left to find the trail into the woods. This red-blazed trail soon splits and heads downhill towards houses on Triphammer Rd. The bird's oak tree is just before that split, about 20 yards to the north of the trail.

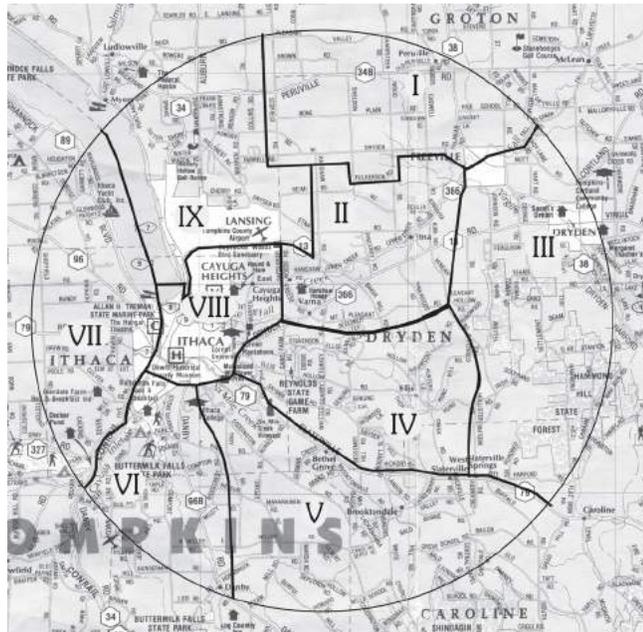


Sister Bird Club Network **News**

Jody Enck

On Friday, 3 November, I participated in a Symposium about the Sister Bird Club Network (SBCN) at the joint conferences of the 21st Mesoamerican Society for Biology and Conservation, and 6th Partners in Flight. The conferences were held in San Jose, Costa Rica. Jody gave one of six presentations during the symposium, providing information about what the network is, why it was formed, and how it operates.

Mayron Mejia and Oliver Komar (president, and vice president, respectively, of the Honduran Ornithological Association) spoke about how the SBCN is helping clubs



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.

throughout Honduras meet strategic planning goals.

Katinka Domen and William Oreallana of Beaks and Peaks Birding and Adventure Tours in Honduras talked about the importance of ecotourism and how SBCN can help ecotourism efforts at the local scale.

Chris Fischer, Ian Gardner, Mark Bonta, and Laura Jackson (from three different Audubon chapters in Pennsylvania) spoke about how their chapters are already participating with local bird guides, coffee growers and distributors, and bird researchers on projects in Honduras.

Francisco Rovelo and Norman Espinosa from the Minerva School in Gracias, Lempira, Honduras and the Hummingbirds birdwatching club joined us by video to talk about how the SBCN can connect youth with birds, birding, and each other.

Finally, Oliver Komar gave a second talk, this time representing Club de Aves Zamorano, about the contribution of visiting birders to science through eBird.

Although we only had about a 12-17 participants in the audiences at any point throughout the morning, these participants were excited to get the word out about the SBCN. (There were 5-6 concurrent sessions happening at any one time during the joint conferences which decreased the number of participants in any one session). The night before the symposium, our Facebook group had 197 people who had asked to become members. Within one week after the symposium, that number had climbed up to over 350 members!

See the reminders below in this newsletter about our upcoming trips, to Honduras in January and to Costa Rica in April, with the Sister Bird Club



Owl Trip, November 4, 2017

Suan Yong

About seven cars worth of participants joined Bob McGuire and me on this owling trip. We started at Sapsucker Woods by the East Trail crossing, familiarizing ourselves with the playback repertoire but eliciting no response. My thermal camera found a hot spot in a tree cavity, which a spotlight and binoculars showed to be a mouse. Continuing to the spruce grove at Dodge Road, a pair of **Great Horned Owls** hooted from the distant woods across the field. This continued unabated even as our sequence of playback from smallest to largest species drew no response from any other owls. At the Durland Preserve, my thermal camera picked up two raccoons clambering about a tree. Again our playback drew no response, ditto at our next stop along Thomas Road. Our luck with playback was not good this night. I did, however, see and track a fast-moving critter gliding from tree to tree then clambering quickly up a tree trunk before gliding away into the woods. It looked to be a flying squirrel! I'm not sure how many others got to see this over my shoulder, however.

At this point, we decided to drive over to John Confer's HHOWLS banding site, which he was gracious enough to open for us despite the unfavorable forecast (strong south winds, warm temps, bright moon, approaching rain). In spite of the forecast, they netted two **Northern Saw-Whet Owls** in their first check before our arrival, and when we arrived to join their next check, we were treated

Network. Please contact me if you have questions or want to register for these trips, jwe4@cornell.edu.

Travel to Honduras in January

If you are interested in traveling to Honduras in January with Jody Enck and others from the Cayuga Bird Club, please contact Jody at jwe4@cornell.edu ASAP.

Discover hundreds of the birds of Honduras during the annual [Lake Yojoa Birding Blitz](#), scheduled for **January 25 - 29, 2018**. There is also a pretour option that can extend your trip to 7 or 11 days, and/or for a "post-tour" to the Gracias and Copan areas, January 29 - Feb 3, 2018. These tours are arranged with guides from [Beaks and Peaks](#). The cost starts at only \$800, and includes hotel, 3 meals/day, non-alcoholic beverages, all in-country transportation (*not* airfare to/from Honduras), entrance fees to parks/reserves in the trip, guiding fees, and more.



Black-Mandibled Toucan, photo by Wes Blauvelt

Birding Trip to Costa Rica in April!

The Cayuga Bird Club has arranged a trip with [Holbrook Travel](#) to **Costa Rica**, a country in which more than 870 species of birds have been recorded. This trip is planned for **April**

to close views of their third bird of the night, a feisty little ASY female that kept clicking its bill while being measured and banded.



Our large crowd took turns inside the tiny banding shed learning about the banding process, and seeing the fluorescing of new wing feathers under the UV light.



As we headed out, their next net check found their fourth bird of the night, which John showed us as we drove away down the hill.

Our final stop of the night was the north entrance to the Roy H. Park Preserve, where we sat on the boardwalk facing the evergreen stand going through the playback sequence. Again, no response, and soon Bob started playing other bird songs to quiz ourselves.

Despite our poor luck at playbacks, we did hear Great Horned Owls, and got to see two Northern Saw-Whet Owls in hand. Thanks to all who participated.

Hammond Hill 2017 Owl Banding

20 - April 29, 2018. The cost is \$2500 per person, and includes all meals, accommodations and activities. (The fee does not include international airfare). The trip is appropriate for both beginners and more advanced birders.

Trip highlights will include taking hikes in the 500-acre rainforest reserve at Selva Verde Lodge, an area that provides habitat to more than 350 bird species, including the endangered Great Green Macaw. Then we will get a different perspective of the rainforest from atop the 100-meter suspended walkway at Tirimbuna Biological Reserve, and see species that spend their time in the forest canopy. We will also visit the world-renowned La Selva Biological Station to watch for species such as Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Crested Guan, and Spectacled Owl and spend two nights in the cloud forest of the San Gerardo de Dota, with its many hummingbirds, tanagers and flowerpiercers.

For more information and a detailed itinerary, contact Jody Enck at jwe4@cornell.edu. You do not have to be a Cayuga Bird Club member to join this trip.



January 8, 2018

Cayuga Bird Club Meeting
Share Your Photos Night

Kevin McGowan will once again host the Cayuga Bird Club's annual "Share Your Photos Night."

Report

John Confer

We banded 65 newly captured Northern Saw-whet Owls this season. This year most of the owls were at least in their second year with only about 1/3 of the owls being hatch year birds. In addition, we recaptured one bird that we banded in 2015. We obtained two foreign recoveries, i.e., birds banded elsewhere. One hatch-year bird was banded in fall 2015 at Prince Edward Point Bird Observatory on the north shore of Lake Ontario, about 100 miles almost due north of us. The other was banded as a hatch year bird in 2016 in southern Pennsylvania. Two of our banded birds were recaptured elsewhere. One that we banded in 2015 was recaptured in fall at a banding station operated by a faculty member of McGill University located on the north shore of St. Lawrence River. The other we banded in 2016 and was recaptured in Garrett County, MD in 2016, but just submitted to the U.S Bird Banding Laboratory.

We also captured an Eastern Screech Owl. It was a hatch year bird in beautiful white and black plumage, not really gray. We assisted the young bird on what was probably its southward migration by several miles.

We had one unfortunate instance of a decapitated bird in the net. Karen and I have seen a weasel around our house this summer and guess that the most likely predator was a weasel. We tried live-trapping on many subsequent occasions. We did not have any further net mortality and did not catch the presumed weasel.

I repeat that the wonderful folks who come out to assist with the banding make the laborious work possible and so very highly enjoyable. The collegiality is so pleasant. We had the Cayuga Bird Club field trip with perhaps 15 people. Assistants with the banding include about 15 Cornell graduate students and at least 40 who came out repeatedly on assigned weekday nights. In addition, with prior permission, we had about 10 people drop in for

Club members can share a maximum of **five** photos during the **3 minutes** you will have to take the stage. Send them by **January 4** to Kevin at kjm2@cornell.edu. **The Subject Line on the email MUST BE "Bird club photo submission Jan2018."** 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!

Montezuma Audubon Center Nature Photography Tour with Jim Montanus

December 2, 12:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Ever wonder how to take the best picture with your camera? No camera is too big or small to take the perfect picture. Join us for a traveling photography class lead by renowned photographer Jim Montanus who will begin with a presentation about birding throughout the Montezuma Wetlands Complex and the fundamentals of photography. Later, we'll travel around the Montezuma Wetlands Complex with Mr. Montanus to explore birding hot spots while receiving expert photography advice. Fee: \$50/adult. Call 315-365-3588 to register.

See the [Montezuma Audubon Center website](#) for information about other upcoming events at the MAC.

NYSDEC Winter Raptor Surveys

It's almost that time of year! It sure feels like we're finished with heat

single night visits. I add that the meals and home-



baked bread were noted favorably by net openers who arrived at 6:15 or even 5:45 after the time change.

photo by Gladys Birdsall

Thus, we caught 71 birds plus the unfortunate mortality. We gained capture-recapture data for 5 birds that we processed at some time, adding significantly to our understanding of migration direction and survival.



Taughannock Falls State Park Loon Watch

Wes Blauvelt

Several years ago on a clear blue sky November morning I observed a Common Loon flying high in the sky over my house in South Danby. At the time I can remember wondering where this bird was coming from. Flip forward ten years and I found myself on another November morning at Taughannock Falls State Park counting **Common Loons** as they flew south in the early morning light.

On November 11, 2017, nine Cayuga Bird Club Members joined me in a loon watch. The morning was brisk, with temperatures starting out in the high teens, blue skies and a light wind out of the NNE. The lake was slightly choppy with a shimmery fog

waves this fall, meaning wintering raptors will soon be showing up in local fields and wetlands. Every year, NYSDEC regions across the state monitor wintering raptor presence to record where and how these birds are spending their time here. Some of these species are of conservation concern, such as the Short-eared Owl and Northern Harrier, and our data helps in planning management decisions that might affect these species.

Since we have so much potential habitat here in DEC Region 8 (roughly the counties between Iroquois NWR and Montezuma NWR/Cayuga Lake), we depend on volunteer surveyors to help us find wintering raptors. We record any owls, hawks, and other raptors that we see during hour-long surveys around sunset. Surveyors have been treated to some great sights in the past, like talon-locking owls, eagles buzzing flocks of geese, and even other critters like mink playing in the snow. Yes, it does involve being outside in the WNY winter, but our pre-survey meetings always include hot drinks and snacks to help fortify us against the cold!

We run surveys out of two locations in order to cover a large portion of the Finger Lakes/Genesee region, and survey sites are usually within a 20-minute drive of our meeting location. Avon-area surveys are held every other Tuesday (starting 11/21) and we meet beforehand at the DEC Avon office (6274 E. Avon-Lima Rd). **Trumansburg-area surveys are held every other Thursday (starting 12/7)** out of the Ulysses Philomathic Library (74 E. Main St). Our first few meetings/surveys will take place around the 3:30-5:30pm time frame. We run surveys through April, and since sunset time changes as the winter goes on, if your schedule

lifting from its surface. While these conditions made it difficult to observe birds on the lake surface, the clear sky was perfect for identifying high flying loons.

We used the 15 minute interval method initiated by Bob Meade many years ago to count the loons. Our count began at 6:20 AM and ran through 8:20 AM. The loon flight was steady throughout the morning but not spectacular. About an hour into the count we began to notice a flight of loons that were traveling along the western shore of Cayuga Lake and at a much higher altitude than birds observed earlier in the morning. I believe this flight represented birds that originated from Lake Ontario. They would have been airborne for about an hour and had gained considerable altitude during their flight to the Cayuga Lake basin.

The morning produced a number of other noteworthy observations. A couple of **Long-tailed Ducks** swam just offshore and provided excellent views; Ken Kemphues and Ann Mitchell found two **Red-necked Grebes** in the shimmer. A **Dunlin** flew in and landed on concrete rip rap at the entrance to Taughannock Creek. It remained for an extended



period as it slipped along the icy shoreline while foraging. Several scoter flights were seen in the distance, with one **White-winged Scoter** overflying our observation post. The remainder of our sightings were comprised of **Canada Goose, Mallards, Double-crested Cormorant, American Goldfinch, Ring-billed** and **Herring Gulls**.

After two hours of observation everyone was ready to head home and warm their feet... satisfied that we had successfully counted **127 Common Loons**

doesn't allow you to join us early in the season, later might work out.

Whether you're a seasoned veteran or a brand-new birder, all are welcome to come and join in. Newbies are paired with staff or experienced surveyors until they feel comfortable with the process, and you are welcome to help with just one survey, the entire season, or anything in between.

Please send me an email at christina.hoh@dec.ny.gov if you'd like more information or think you might want to participate. Please include which meeting location you'd be interested in working from.

Thanks so much to everyone who has made these last few years of surveys such a success- our region is truly unique in having such a dedicated volunteer crew collecting a wealth of information. Hope to see you soon!

- Christina Hoh

during our watch.



NB - On November 17, 2017, Bill Evans reported on eBird that he had counted 605 Common Loons from an observation post on his Bald Hill Rd./Comfort Rd./Lieb Rd. block. Maybe South Danby should become another observation post for migrating loons!

photos by Diane Morton



New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) Conference and Annual Meeting

Diane Traina

Despite snow, temperatures in the 20s, and a stiff wind, the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) meeting held in Niagara Falls on November 10-12 was fun and informative.

For anyone who is not familiar with NYSOA, it was founded in 1946 as the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs and adopted its current name in 2003. Its purpose is "to document the ornithology of New York State; foster interest in and appreciation

of birds; and to protect birds and their habitats.” NYSOA’s activities include documenting rare sightings, keeping the official checklist for New York State, hosting the NYS Young Birders Club, advocating on statewide and regional conservation issues, heading up the Breeding Bird Atlas and Waterfowl Count, and publishing several annual and quarterly publications. Its membership includes individual members as well as bird clubs and societies, including the Cayuga Bird Club.

Hosted by The Buffalo Ornithological Society, this year’s conference presented local and regional field trips, a “Birders Marketplace” with 20 organizations and artists, talks and paper presentations on a range of topics, two evening keynotes, and the 70th NYSOA Annual Meeting.

On Friday night, Paul Guris, owner of See Life Paulagics, spoke about pelagic birding and the numerous species seen from his pelagic trips, which originate from Brooklyn, New Jersey and Delaware. On Saturday night, Neil Hayward, author of *Lost Among the Birds: Accidentally Finding Myself in One Very Big Year*, told the story of his “accidental big year” in 2013 when he observed 749 species (making eight trips to Alaska), and breaking the ABA record.

The Annual Meeting was attended by delegates from around the state, including Kevin McGowan and Diane Traina (sitting-in for Jane Graves) from the Cayuga Bird Club. NYSOA’s 10 committees reported on their activities during the past year. The Research Committee’s report by Bob Spahn initiated a lengthy discussion about the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas III (BBA), which is slated to begin in 2020. The BBA is very important in documenting the location of breeding birds in the state and always reveals the location of species where they were not previously known to exist. This is a 5-6 year citizen science project involving thousands of volunteers all over the state. Preliminary meetings at the Lab of Ornithology have started. The project plans to use eBird with a special portal designed for the NYS BBA. At least two other states, Wisconsin and Virginia, have successfully

used this approach for data collection and analysis. NYSOA and its member clubs and individuals provide the expertise and volunteers needed to accomplish this project – it is the only organization in the state with this capability. Bob Spahn made a plea for volunteers to come forward now for the 2020 BBA. In particular, the initiative is in need of a Steering Committee Chair to step forward as soon as possible. If you or someone you know has the management skills, time, and expertise to meet this challenge, please contact NYSOA for further information.

Connie Adams, Senior Wildlife Biologist for Region 9, presented a report from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation focusing on numerous statewide and regional bird conservation initiatives. Diane Traina can provide a written copy of this report to anyone who requests it. Lastly, a new member organization was welcomed to NYSOA, the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development.

New NYSOA officers were elected during the full gathering of all attendees on Saturday night, including Michael DeSha as President, and Tim Baird as Vice President.

Plans are already underway for next year's NYSOA conference, which will be hosted in Rochester by the Burroughs Audubon Nature Club and the Rochester Birding Association on October 5-7, 2018. If you aren't a member of NYSOA yet, now is a good time to join!

<http://www.nybirds.org/FedMembership.htm>



Snowy Owl Capture, Examination and Banding

Donna Scott

On Sunday, November 19, 2017, I drove to the Goose Haven/Wilgoose hunting club on NYS Rt. 89 (west of Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge and north of US Rt. 20) to see the **Snowy Owl** that had been reported there. Just as I arrived and pulled off the road, I saw the owl land on a tan, round object on the ground out in the field towards MNWR. What looked to me like a net trap for raptors was indeed a remote-controlled trap baited with a pigeon; later I found out it was also baited with two cold-tolerant Russian Hamsters in a protective round-topped cage. The Snowy Owl had been attracted by the little hamsters and was quickly caught while it was engaged in trying to catch the pigeon.

Then I saw a car pull up near the trap and a familiar looking man got out and started to free the owl from the trap. The man, whose car license plates read "Owlman," turned out to be Tom McDonald, whom I had met before. He does Snowy Owl research and banding with "Snowstorm" in New York state. By the time I got there, Tom had carefully placed the owl headfirst into a large cylindrical tube with a tight

fitting lid and many air holes; it was equipped with clothesline handles. Then he put the unharmed pigeon and the hamsters into another part of the car. He said to follow him to the Goose Haven hunting clubhouse where he would be examining and banding the owl.

This was an interesting place, this "club". It was full of hunters in camo and orange-colored outdoor garb, mostly men, with one young woman (someone's daughter) and a preteen boy. A crock pot of beans and bacon was steaming away on the same table where Tom put the owl and his equipment. A refrigerator full of beer and soda stood nearby and the rooms have a nice view of Montezuma. About 12 people and I circled the table to watch the proceedings.

Tom clearly used this event as an "educational moment" to inform the group of hunters about how, what and why he was doing the banding and examination. During the process, he enlisted three of them as volunteers to help hold the owl in various positions. He explained what he was doing the whole time and the group was rapt with attention.

First Tom weighed the owl while it was still in the tube. Then he slowly, carefully removed the owl, which remained quite calm during the whole process. Not once did it struggle or try to fly. He laid the owl on its back and asked for a volunteer to hold the owl's legs and feet (with 1 ¼-inch sharp talons) securely while he measured the bird.



Another man held an outstretched wing flat on the table so Tom could measure it and then skillfully take a blood sample from a vein near the bird's torso. I wrote numbers in his notebook to try to be helpful, but clearly Tom was used to doing all this work by himself.

Tom announced that he thought the owl was an immature male and banded it with a large, stiff band; he said the newer bands are a lot stiffer than the older ones and they are difficult to secure to the bird's leg. When Tom took the owl off the table to stand upright on the hand of the "leg-holding guy", Tom showed the young woman how to stretch out the wings so he could photograph the markings on each of them.





At one point Tom told the group that because it was warm in the room, the tiny, gray lice on the owl's skin were now crawling out to the ends of its feathers, which we could clearly see! The last thing Tom did was to ink two large black patches on the back of the head and the nape of the owl so that from afar people could tell this owl had been banded and examined. Then he let the group take photos with the owl (with phone camera flashes off) and we all went outside to watch him release the owl.



The bird flew down the hill towards the two trailers by the muddy dirt road and landed on the black one, where he was still perched two hours later when I drove by after seeing ~51 Sandhill Cranes at Knox

Marcellus Marsh. Being in the right place at the right time made this a most interesting afternoon!

Tom's request: *Please lend a hand with snowy owl research in NYS and report all snowy owl sightings, deaths and injuries as soon as possible to:*

Tom McDonald (585) 233-1429.

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, newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org. Of particular interest are articles about local bird sightings, bird behavior, birding hot spots, book reviews, and original poetry, art, and photos. To make sure you don't miss an issue, add newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org to your email contacts.

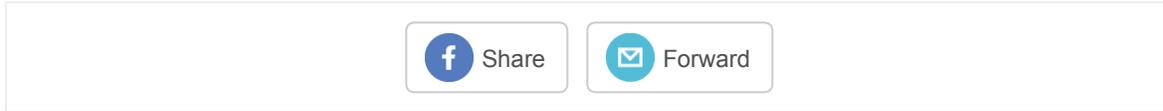
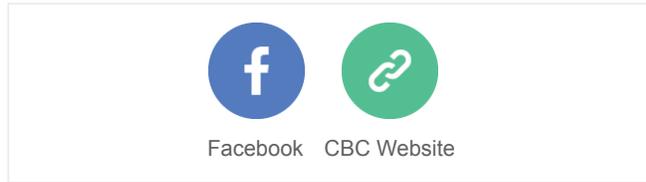
Cayuga Bird Club Officer Contact Information is available on the Cayuga Bird Club website.

Chickadee illustration in masthead by Karen Allaben-Confer

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