

**Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter - December 2018**

**Attention:** [Not seeing all the content? View the full newsletter in your browser with this link](#)



# Cayuga Bird Club

## December 2018

### In This Issue:

[Cayuga Bird Club Meeting December 10](#)

[Calendar](#)

[From the President](#)  
*Diane Morton*

[Christmas Bird Count - January 1, 2019](#)

[Upcoming Field Trips](#)

[Field Trip Report - Loon Watch](#)  
*Wes Blauvelt*

[Field Trip Report - Owling](#)  
*Bob McGuire*

[CBC Meeting January 14](#)

---

## **Calendar**

**Dec. 3 Bird of Prey Movie Screening,** 7:00pm, Cornell Cinema

**Dec. 8 Field Trip Up the Lake**  
Leaders: Ken Kemphues and Diane Morton  
8:00 am - 4:30pm

**Dec. 10 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting,**  
7:30 - 9:00pm  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Speakers: Bob McGuire and Marie Read  
*Icelandic Saga*

**Dec. 16 Field Trip on the West Side of the Lake**  
Leader: Josh Snodgrass

## **Cayuga Bird Club Meeting** **December 10, 2018**

### **Speakers: Bob McGuire and Marie Read** ***Icelandic Saga***

Marie and Bob spent a combined total of three weeks photographing and recording the birds of Iceland. Join them for a tour of this exotic land: the remote highlands, seabird cliffs, and offshore islands. Lots of puffins, too!



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 4000 recordings to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library. His personal collection includes the vocalizations of nearly 600 North American birds.



Marie Read is a professional wildlife photographer and author, based in Freeville NY, who specializes in birds

1:00 - 6:00pm

### Jan. 1 Christmas Bird Count

#### Jan. 1 Christmas Bird Count Compilation Dinner

6:30 pm, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

#### Jan. 13 Field Trip Around the Lake

Leader: Bob McGuire

8:00am – 4:30pm

#### Jan. 14 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting, 7:30 - 9:30pm

Share Your Photos

Host: Kevin McGowan

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

## Upcoming Field Trips

### Sat, December 8, 8:00am

Up the Lake, led by Ken Kemphues & Diane Morton

Meet at Stewart Park, east end

Join Ken Kemphues and Diane Morton for a full day trip around the lake. We'll look for a variety of wintering waterfowl and raptors. Meet at the east end of Stewart Park at 8:00 am for carpooling. Dress very warmly and bring a scope if you have one. Bring a lunch and/or snacks and a beverage. We'll make a stop to purchase food as well. We plan to be back 4-5 pm.

### Sun, December 16, 1:00pm

West Side of the Lake - Waterfowl and Short-eared Owls, led by Josh Snodgrass

Meet at Taughannock Falls State Park, North Point parking lot

Josh Snodgrass will lead an afternoon - sunset trip on Sunday, December 16 on the west side of Cayuga Lake. We'll look for overwintering waterfowl along the lake shore, grassland birds (snow buntings, etc.), and try for Short-eared Owl and possible Snowy Owl or Northern Shrike depending on what

and their behavior. Her images are published worldwide in magazines, books, and calendars, and she has authored many magazine articles as well as several books. Her latest book, *Mastering Bird Photography*, will be available as an e-book in December and in print in March 2019.

Cayuga Bird Club meetings start at 7:30pm, the second Monday of every month September - June. Doors open at 7:00pm and all meetings are open to the public. Seating is limited; if room capacity is reached, the building will be locked.

## From the President

*Diane Morton*



One of the best things about winter in Ithaca is winter birding! I used to be more of a fair-weather birder, getting out for the spring migration, but not much at this time of year. I wasn't aware of the large rafts of waterfowl on Cayuga Lake, the short-eared owls that fly over fields at dusk, or the field birds that come down from the north for just a few months. But then I found (mostly through Cayuga Bird Club field trips) that winter is a great time to get out and enjoy the natural beauty — and birds — of our area. Redheads and other ducks are gathering now in large numbers on our unfrozen Cayuga Lake. Loons are also out there; I even heard one yodeling on a quiet day at Long Point State Park this week. A Red-throated Loon has been hanging out near Stewart Park, close enough to show its very white winter throat and face plumage, in contrast to nearby Common Loons. Common Goldeneyes have returned and are already engaged in head-throwing courtship displays. Swans are noisily occupying the north end of the lake, and large skeins of Snow Geese are in the air.

Ken Kemphues and I will lead a trip up the lake with a focus on waterfowl on December 8. Join us if you'd enjoy going out to find some of these wintering birds. Winter is also the time to find different birds of prey like

has arrived (possibly at Finger Lakes Regional Airport, or at one of the Finger Lakes National Forest grassland sites). Actual locations to be determined. Should be a fun time! We expect to return by 6pm. Be sure to dress very warmly.

### **Sun, January 13, 8:00am**

Around the Lake, led by Bob McGuire  
Meet at Stewart Park, east end

Join Bob McGuire on a full day trip around Cayuga Lake, with a focus on waterfowl. Meet at the east end of Stewart Park at 8:00 am for carpooling. Dress very warmly and bring a scope if you have one. Bring a lunch and/or snacks and a beverage. We'll make a stop to purchase food as well. We plan to be back 4-5 pm.

These field trips are open to all.

---

## **Field Trip Report - Loon Watch**

*Wes Blauvelt*

For the fourth year in a row members of the Cayuga Bird Club assembled at the mouth of Taughannock Creek in hopes of observing the migration of Common Loons along Cayuga Lake. On November 10th seven members from the club gathered at dawn for the Loon Watch. The count began at 6:20am and was divided into 15 minute intervals until 8:20am. The morning started out dark and overcast with intermittent snow squalls that made visibility difficult. These poor conditions may have contributed to our failure to observe any loons during the first count period. However, as the sky brightened and cleared to a frosty blue, our luck changed and a constant flow of loons was observed over the next seven count intervals starting at 6:35am with 54 loons, followed by 180,

Rough-Legged Hawks, Northern Shrikes and Short-eared and Snowy Owls. Josh Snodgrass will lead an afternoon trip to look for owls, raptors, field birds and waterfowl on the west side of Cayuga Lake on December 16.

I enjoy starting my day by watching the birds that come to get a little extra sustenance from our feeders and suet at this time of year. Each winter there are a few surprises. We've had a Fox Sparrow under the feeder all week, scratching through the snow and grass to get bits of spilled seed. Other people have reported Evening Grosbeaks at their feeders (I'd love to see one this season). This year is predicted to be a big irruption year for winter finches, due to a poor cone crop in Canada. In addition to Evening Grosbeaks, Red Crossbills and Redpolls have been spotted in our area this month.

I'll be participating in the Christmas Bird Count on January 1, a fun way to contribute to Audubon's ongoing and enormous data collection while getting out to find birds. Maybe I'll find some winter finches this time! The first time that Ken and I joined the count, we simply told the coordinator that we were available to help wherever needed. Assigned to an area we had not birded before, we enjoyed exploring new spots and hiking new trails while looking and listening for birds. It is really special to be a part of this project — and a great way to start the new year.

I encourage you all to join this year's Christmas Bird Count, even if only for a short part of the day. Please see more details about the Christmas Bird Count below, and contact me at [cayugabirdclub.president@gmail.com](mailto:cayugabirdclub.president@gmail.com) if you're new to the count and would like to participate.

Good birding,

*Diane*

---

## **Christmas Bird Count - January 1, 2019**

Get ready to participate in Audubon's Christmas Bird Count on January 1, 2019! This is Audubon's 119th Christmas Bird Count and our club's 57th consecutive year of participation. We will start the new year off by

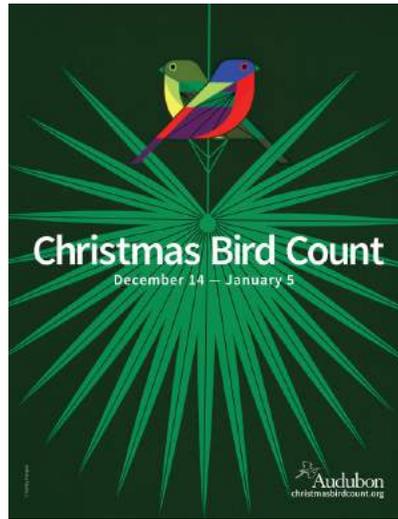
99, 54, 10, 18 and 3. The last two count intervals did not produce any additional loons. Our total count for the morning was 418.

At the same time that our Loon Watch was taking place at Taughannock Falls State Park, Bill Evans was stationed at an observation point in South Danby where he reported 165 Common Loons by 8:00am. I cannot help but think that some of the loons we observed at Taughannock had also passed Bill's watch site.



Photo by Diane Morton

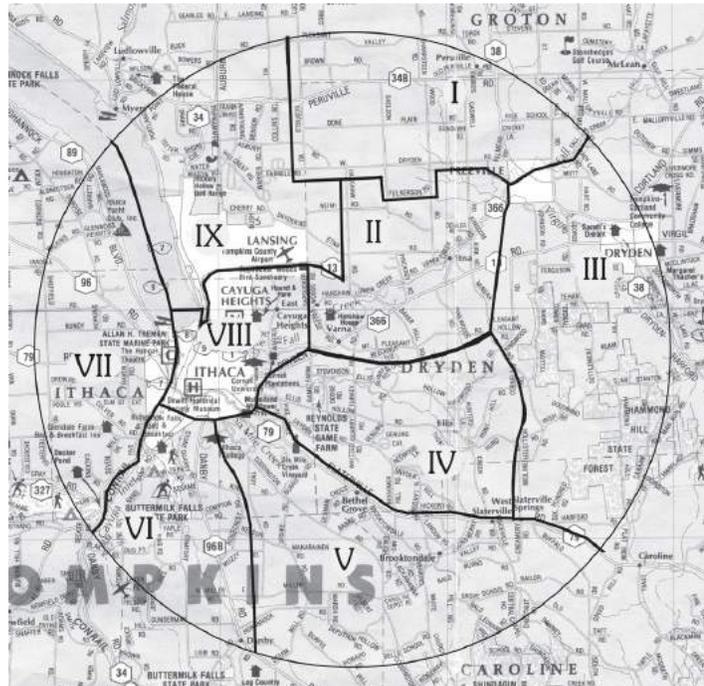
I am often asked where do the loons go once they leave Cayuga Lake. The answer is that I really don't know... but I have a theory. Drawing a straight line between the Taughannock and South Danby watch sites and extending that line south will result in an intersection with the Susquehanna River near Wyalusing. Assuming that loons travel a relatively straight line, once they are over the Susquehanna River valley, they would have an excellent navigation aid to Scranton with a short overland hop to the Chesapeake and Delaware Bays. With flight speeds during migration reaching 75 mph, our Cayuga Lake loons could reach these destinations within four hours. In an attempt to verify that the Cayuga Lake flight of loons arrived at the Chesapeake and Delaware Bay areas later on the 10th of November, I reviewed eBird postings from the counties that surround the north end of these two bays. I did not find any reports that a large flight of loons had arrived during the afternoon of the 10th and thus have no evidence to support



counting all the birds we can find within our 15-mile Ithaca count circle on Tuesday, January 1. Everyone is welcome to participate for the count, which is used to map species distribution and abundance of birds across North America as well as areas of South America, the

Caribbean and the Pacific Islands. Audubon reported that for the 2017/18 count, "76,987 observers out in the field and watching feeders tallied up 59,242,067 birds representing 2673 different species and 426 identifiable forms—about one-quarter of the world's known avifauna". We are pleased to have contributed to this effort. Last January 1, we found 101 species, a new record for count day in the Ithaca area circle.

Within the 15-mile diameter Ithaca count circle, shown below, we have nine areas from which to choose, each with their own hotspots.



There are many options for participation and your input is invaluable at all levels. You can choose a count area or stay at home to count birds that come to feeders in

my theory. However, it is fun to speculate on our loon's flight path and perhaps in the future we could find a bird club in southern Pennsylvania or northern Delaware that would enjoy coordinating a loon watch with the Cayuga Bird Club.

## **Field Trip Report - Owling**

*Bob McGuire*

Something over 30 people joined Suan Yong and me for the owl crawl on November 3. It was impossible to get an exact count because folks joined and left as the evening progressed. Nevertheless, I was astounded - over 30, in the dark, on a cold and blustery night!



*Infrared image of the group by Suan Yong*

We got started a little after dark at Bull Pasture Pond on Bluegrass Lane and quickly had an Eastern Screech-owl respond to playback. With Suan's help (and his thermal imaging camera) we were able to locate it and get good looks. From there we drove up Mt Pleasant Road to try for Great Horned Owl opposite the observatory - no luck. Then on to the Park Preserve North for Barred Owl. Again, no luck and none again from the parking lot at the end of Hammond Hill Road.

We then headed out to John Confer's banding station in Caroline. Although it was a slow night for migrating owls, he had a Northern Saw-whet Owl ready for us. The entire crew got to see a live owl, up close, and to hear about the

your yard. You can count owls in the very early morning, or wait until it has warmed up a bit to go out on your own or with others. 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 get out and enjoy the day.

Christmas Bird Count Area Leaders are listed below. If there is an area where you'd like to help count birds, please get in touch with that leader and they will discuss specific locations with you. If you'd like assistance in choosing a count area, please email Diane Morton at [cayugabirdclub.president@gmail.com](mailto:cayugabirdclub.president@gmail.com) or Asher Hockett at [veery715@gmail.com](mailto:veery715@gmail.com).

If you choose to stay home and count birds at your feeders, write down the total time you spend watching, the species you see (or hear), and the maximum number of birds of each species seen at any one time. (This is the same protocol as Project Feederwatch). Debbie Mahoney, with Donna Scott, our club volunteers, will be answering the phone at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology (607-254-2473) between 4:00pm and 6:00pm to record your tallies for each species. And please, call before 6:00pm!

### **Count areas and their leaders**

I Colleen Richards [clr82@juno.com](mailto:clr82@juno.com)  
West Dryden, Hile School Road area. Open fields, secondary growth fields, and woodlots. Possible Merlin, White-winged Crossbills, blackbirds, and sparrows.

II Bob McGuire [bmcguire@clarityconnect.com](mailto:bmcguire@clarityconnect.com)  
Fall Creek area, Mount Pleasant, Neimi/Hanshaw Road. Woodlands and fields. Good for turkeys, hawks, and herons.

III Marie Read [mpr5@cornell.edu](mailto:mpr5@cornell.edu)  
Beam Hill, Yellow Barn Road, the northern end of the Jim Schug Trail in Dryden. Pine and spruce forests. Good for winter finches.

IV Phil McNeil [mc14850@yahoo.com](mailto:mc14850@yahoo.com) and Laura Stenzler [Im9@cornell.edu](mailto:Im9@cornell.edu)

capture, banding, and information-gathering process.



*Photo by Bob McGuire*

Many thanks to Suan for co-leading, to John for opening his nets, and for Julia for showing us the little owl. The great irony for me was that, after missing Barred and Great Horned Owls all evening, I was awakened by a pair of Great Horned Owls dueting outside my window in the middle of the night!

## **Cayuga Bird Club Meeting** **January 14**

Title: Share Your Photos Night!

Host: Kevin McGowan, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Club members can share a maximum of five photos during the 3 minutes you will have to take the stage. Send them by January 11 to Kevin at [kjm2@cornell.edu](mailto:kjm2@cornell.edu). The Subject Line on the email **MUST BE** "Bird club photo submission Jan2019." 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.

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

V Sandy Podulka [sgp4@cornell.edu](mailto:sgp4@cornell.edu)

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

VI Asher Hockett [veery715@gmail.com](mailto:veery715@gmail.com)

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

VII Josh Snodgrass [cedarshiva@gmail.com](mailto:cedarshiva@gmail.com)

West side of Cayuga Lake, Bostwick Road, Mecklenberg Road. Good for waterfowl, including all three species of merganser.

VIII Lynn Leopold [lynnbird58@yahoo.com](mailto:lynnbird58@yahoo.com)

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

IX Mark Chao [markchao@imt.org](mailto:markchao@imt.org)

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

At the end of the day, join other Christmas Bird Count participants, families and friends at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Johnson Visitor Center, open at 6:00pm, for our **compilation dinner** at 6:30pm followed by the compilation of sightings at 7:15pm. Bring a dish to share, a beverage and your own table service. The dinner will be held in the lobby of the building. (Please do not bring food or beverages into the Fiertes auditorium.)

We are pleased to have Paul Anderson serve as our count compiler again this year. Paul will also tell us how this year's numbers compare with previous years' counts during the compilation after the dinner.

Our counts will be submitted to Audubon. A summary report is published each year and all count data are available on their [website](#). We urge you to browse this

## Bird of Prey Movie Screening

Monday, December 3, 7:00pm

Cornell Cinema, 104 Willard Straight Hall, Ithaca



Hosted by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the screening will be the first in the Ithaca area for this award-winning new documentary about the highly endangered Great Philippine Eagle. This spectacular bird is the world's largest and rarest eagle. Fewer than 800 individuals remain today. The future of these iconic raptors—and of an untold number of other species—is tied to the fate of the Philippines' last fragments of old-growth forest. Will conservation efforts be enough to save this majestic species from winking out? The Cornell Lab's Eric Liner directed the film and will be at the screening to answer questions. Learn more about the movie and watch the [trailer](#). Admission is free.

### Minutes

of the November 12, 2018  
Cayuga Bird Club meeting  
are [available](#) on the Cayuga  
Bird Club website.

site to learn more about the importance and scope of this ongoing project that we contribute to each year.

Additional Resources:

[Audubon guide on what data to collect during your Christmas Bird Count](#)

[Guide to Christmas Bird Count party miles and hours Checklist](#)

Join us for the count on New Year's Day!

---

## 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 7:15pm 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](http://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 the monthly Cayuga Bird Club eNewsletter, from September through June. To make sure you don't miss an issue, add [newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org) to your email contacts.

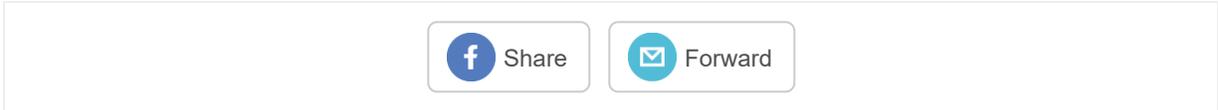
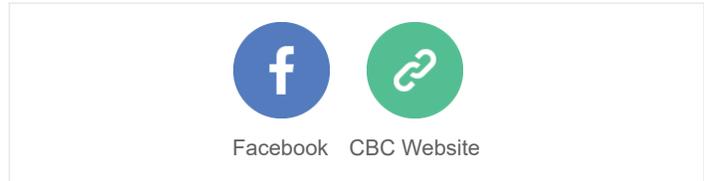
Newsletter submissions may be sent to [Tracy McLellan](#). Of particular interest are articles about local bird sightings, bird behavior, birding hot spots, book reviews, bird conservation news and original poetry, art, and photos.

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

*Chickadee illustration in masthead by Karen Allaben-Confer*

---

**Don't miss** an issue of the newsletter: add [newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org](mailto:newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org) to your email contacts. **Stay in touch** with the Cayuga Bird Club through our [Facebook](#) page and [Cayuga Bird Club Website](#).



You are receiving this email  
as a member of the Cayuga Bird Club.  
We do not share our email list with any other organization.

Cayuga Bird Club  
159 Sapsucker Woods Road  
Ithaca NY 14850

[unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

