



# Cayuga Bird Club

## February 2018

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## Calendar

**Feb. 5 A Night at the Museum (of Vertebrates)**

**7:30 - 9:00 pm**, Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Vanya Rohwer and Casey Dillman, Curators

**Feb. 11 Field Trip: Around the Lake**  
**8:00 am - 4:00 pm**

Leader: Ann Mitchell  
Meet at Stewart Park, east end

**Feb. 12 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting**  
**7:30 pm**, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

## Cayuga Bird Club Meeting February 12, 2018



**Speaker: Bob McGuire**

### ***Across Siberia: Birding with a Microphone***

Bob spent part of last summer traveling across Siberia, from the Mongolian border to the Arctic Ocean. Join him for recordings, videos, and photos of some amazing birds as well as landscapes, street scenes and stories from an experience he will never forget.



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.

Cayuga Bird Club meetings start at 7:30 pm, the second Monday of every month. All meetings are open to the public. Seating is on a first come, first

Speaker: Bob McGuire,  
*Across Siberia: Birding with a  
Microphone*

### Feb. 16-19 Great Backyard Bird Count

**Feb. 24 Field Trip: Up the Lake**  
**8:00 am - 4:30 pm**  
Leader: Suan Yong  
Meet at Stewart Park, east end

**Mar. 4 Field Trip: West side of the  
Lake**  
**8:00 am - 12:30 pm**  
Leader: Ken Haas  
Meet by the big turtle at the Ithaca  
Children's Garden

**Mar. 11 Field Trip: Around the Lake**  
**8:00 am - 4:00 pm**  
Leader: Bob McGuire  
Meet at Stewart Park, east end

**Mar. 12 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting**  
**7:30 pm**, Cornell Lab of Ornithology  
Speakers: Alizé Carrère & Shawn  
Billerman  
*Adapt and Thrive: Creatively Living in  
a Climate Changed World*

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

**Minutes**  
of the January 8, 2018  
Cayuga Bird Club meeting  
are [available](#) on the Cayuga  
Bird Club website.

### February Field Trips

There will be two all-day field trips in  
February to look for wintering  
waterfowl on Cayuga Lake as well as  
other winter birds nearby.

**Ann Mitchell** will lead the first trip on  
**Sunday, February 11. Meet at the  
east end of Stewart Park at 8:00  
am** for carpooling. Wear warm layers -  
it can be especially cold if there is  
wind. Bring a lunch or snack and  
something to drink. We will also make  
a stop at the north end of the lake for  
food. Bring a scope if you have one.  
We plan to be back around 4:00 pm.  
Email [Ann  
at annmitchell13@gmail.com](mailto:AnnMitchell13@gmail.com) if you  
have questions.

served basis, starting at 7:00 pm.

*Arctic Fox image by Nathan Pieplow*

### From the President

*Wes Blauvelt*



While January seemed like a long, cold and dark month, my personal birding experiences were anything but! Starting in sub-zero temperatures on New Year's Day, the Christmas Bird Count got me out into bright early morning blue-sky weather to enjoy my first birds of the year. And with reported sightings of **Black Vultures**, **Tufted Duck** and a **Red-headed Woodpecker**, it was only a matter of days before I was able to enjoy observing each of these species. I participated in two club-sponsored field trips around and near the lake that turned up a list of other rarities and hard-to-find birds including **Trumpeter Swans**, **Glaucous Gull**, **Lapland Longspur**, **Snowy Owls** and a **Gyr Falcon**. While birding throughout the Southern Tier, I found **Redheads** on the Susquehanna River, a **Northern Shrike** in the hills of Tioga County, a **Hermit Thrush** tucked into the dense undergrowth on Mt. Zoar above the Chemung River and a **Mute Swan** in the southeast corner of Seneca Lake. Several recent reports of **Northern Saw-whet Owls** were made on eBird and my DEC Raptor Survey colleagues found four **Short-eared Owls** this past week. Together, all of these birds make up a diverse list of species and I have not even talked about the loons, grebes and duck rafts that have been observed on our beautiful lakes. My stretch goal for January was to see 100 birds species; I did not make it, but came close!

Over the next several months there will be great opportunities to see additional birds in our area as the winter birds turn over and are replaced by returning migrants. Under the leadership of Diane Morton and Ann Mitchell your Field Trip Committee has been working hard to put together an active schedule of local birding adventures. Starting in February there will be several more trips around Cayuga Lake to see the changing populations of waterfowl and other birds. We also welcome new

**Suan Yong** will lead a second full-day trip up the lake on **Saturday, February 24. Meet at the east end of Stewart Park at 8:00 am** for carpooling. We plan to return around 4:30 pm. Wear warm layers for the winter weather, and bring lunch and/or snacks and something to drink. Bring a scope if you have one. Contact Suan at [suan.yong@gmail.com](mailto:suan.yong@gmail.com) if you have questions.

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 for the Cayuga Lake Basin**

Cayuga Lake Basin birds reported in January are listed below, excluding those found on the January 1, 2018 Ithaca Christmas Bird Count (detailed in last month's newsletter).

Jan. 1 Lapland Longspur  
Jan. 1 Common Redpoll  
Jan. 3 Trumpeter Swan  
Jan. 3 Wood Duck  
Jan. 3 Short-eared Owl  
Jan. 3 Merlin  
Jan. 4 Common Grackle  
Jan. 5 Pied-Billed Grebe  
Jan. 7 Black Scoter  
Jan. 7 Ring-necked Pheasant  
Jan. 7 Golden Eagle  
Jan. 7 Red-shouldered Hawk  
Jan. 7 Glaucous Gull  
Jan. 9 Gray Catbird  
Jan. 9 Pine Siskin  
Jan. 12 Snowy Owl  
Jan. 12 Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Jan. 14 Gyrfalcon  
Jan. 19 Red-necked Grebe  
Jan. 20 Field Sparrow  
Jan. 21 Northern Shrike  
Jan. 26 Northern Goshawk

**2018 total count: 124 species**

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

leaders Ken Haas, Liisa Mobley and Josh Snodgrass, who will offer trips to new locations, including areas on the west side of the lake, South Monkey Run, and the Finger Lakes National Forest. We have trips planned to more Finger Lakes hot spots in the spring. Check our Cayuga Bird Club [web calendar](#) for more details. And don't forget that Jody Enck will be leading a group of club members and others on a trip to Costa Rica in April. While the deadline for signing up to participate in the Costa Rica trip has passed, it may be possible to work your way into the trip. Talk to Jody.

So now February begins. It's Groundhog Day and I have no idea if Phil saw his shadow or not. But from the looks outside, I would say that winter is here for a while longer. I guess it is time to plan for a brief respite to a sunny spot where the birds are singing. Maybe I should talk to Jody!

Stay warm out there!



### **Field Trip Report - Birds Around the Lake, Including a Gyrfalcon!**

*Bob McGuire*

Seven well-bundled up folks joined Ken Kemphues and me for a day-long jaunt around the lake on Sunday, January 14. This trip was postponed from the previous weekend due to the cold and wind. The conditions today were not much better, starting out around zero but no wind.

Because the south end of the lake was misted over, we began to bird in earnest at Ladoga where we quickly got on a pair of **Trumpeter Swans**. Trumpeters are not unusual in the Basin, but they

## **A Night at the Museum (of Vertebrates)**

Monday, **February 5, 7:30 - 9:00 pm**,  
Cornell Lab of Ornithology

**Vanya Rohwer and Casey Dillman,**  
**Curators**

The best natural history collections are vibrant, dynamic places that reveal new insights into the workings of the natural world. Join Vanya Rohwer and Casey Dillman, curators of the Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates (CUMV), to learn how natural history collections are used to teach, conserve, and inspire new ideas. The lecture takes place in the auditorium as usual, but Vanya and Casey will escort the audience into the museum collections for a special behind-the-scenes peek at the specimens and spaces of the CUMV.

## **A Selection of Photos from Share Your Photos Night**

On January 8, Kevin McGowan once again hosted Cayuga Bird Club's Share Your Photos night. Our members shared photos of birds near and far. Here is a selection of some of these photographs.



*Great Frigatebird, Galapagos, Donna Scott*

are a rare sight in Tompkins County. Our RBA on



the birds brought several more birders out to see them. Then, following up on the sound of distant **Northern Cardinal**, we were drawn to nearby feeders and were able to add **Pine Siskin** and **Northern Mockingbird** to several people's year lists. From the spit at Myers we were able to look past a couple of hunters to add two **Long-tailed Ducks**.

The next stop was Belltown Dairy to try for field birds. We were hugely rewarded with a large flock



of **Snow Buntings**, **Horned Larks**, and two **Lapland Longspurs** feeding intermittently in the middle of the road and in the adjacent field. The view of a Longspur on stubby legs, hunkered in the middle of the road some 50 feet away, was the best that I have ever had!



We picked up **Wild Turkey** along Route 90 north of King Ferry and the continuing **Glaucous Gull** from the bluffs just south of Aurora. There we also had our first and rather small flock of Aythya ducks plus four **White-winged Scoters** and a couple of **Horned Grebes**. I should note there that we never did come across the large numbers of Aythya (numbering in the thousands) that had been seen the previous week along the east side of the lake.

In Union Springs, Factory Street Pond held the usual collection of **Gadwall**, **Buffleheads**,



*Cactus Wren, Arizona, Bob Horn*



*Reddish Egret, Florida, Becky Hansen*



*Northern Flickers, Delaware, Suan Yong*



*Dusky Grouse, Montana, André LaClair*



*Palm Warbler, Sapsucker Woods NY, Paul Anderson*

**Mallards**, and **Black Ducks** as well as three **Green-winged Teal** and a single **Common Goldeneye**. On to the Mill Pond we were able to pick out the single **Wood Duck** amid the thousands of **Canada Geese** and assorted Aythya, Mallards, **American Wigeon**, and Gadwall.



A quick check of the outlet creek yielded the day's only **Belted Kingfisher** and **Song Sparrow**. At this point we were already well past lunch time and took a short break at the Nice 'n Easy - where we ran into Gary Kohlenberg with great directions to the Seneca Falls Snowy Owl.

We found the first **Snowy Owl** in a field just east of the airport runway and a second one perched atop one of the hangers. At that point we were pretty much done for the day and headed south to check on an earlier report of another owl. As we passed the quarry on Hoster Road Diane said something like "That looks the right shape for a falcon". We stopped and, for the next hour, with help from Kevin McGowan, tried for good scope views of a large, dark bird with a consistently dark face that was perched in the tall trees above the quarry and, maddeningly, obscured by branches. Photos were taken and the field marks were discussed, to the ultimate conclusion that there was, again this year, a **GYRFALCON** in the area.



After that we really did head for home, with a quick stop along Ridge Road for the third Snowy Owl of the day.

The trip went a little longer than planned, but the



*Martial Eagle, Uganda, Lindsay Goodloe*



*Cedar Waxwing, Maine, Carl Steckler*



*Ocellated Turkey, Belize, Tracy McLellan*



*Puerto Rican Lizard-Cuckoo, Puerto Rico, Sarah Blodgett*



*Double-striped Thick-knee, Costa*

weather really wasn't a deterrent. I'd have to say that it was a successful trip!

*Gyrfalcon digiscope photo by Wes Blauvelt, other photos by Diane Morton*

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### **Field Trip Report - Snowy Owl, Snow Buntings, Horned Larks and more!**

*Diane Morton*

Ken Kemphues and I led a group of eleven enthusiastic birders on a half day trip along the east side of Cayuga Lake and on roads exploring the farm fields of King Ferry. We started at Stewart Park, where the ice still extended far out so that views of birds on the lake were pretty distant. We had better viewing from East Shore Park, where all of us were able to see **Long-tailed Ducks**, **White-winged Scoters**, and a raft of Aythya, which included both **Greater** and **Lesser Scaup** and a few **Canvasback** with the many **Redheads**. **Common Goldeneye** and **Common Mergansers** were easy to spot, and we also found a couple of **Red-breasted Mergansers**. A small flock of **Eastern Bluebirds** were in a near tree, and Leigh and Wes spotted a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** there just before the birds took flight.

At Ladoga we found more **Long-tailed Ducks**, but not many other waterfowl besides **Common Goldeneye**, **Canada Geese** and a single **Pied-billed Grebe**. We also had an immature **Cooper's Hawk** that perched for good scope views, enabling us to see its yellow eye, banded tail and slightly mottled back.

We moved on to Myers Point, and while viewing waterfowl there, including **Ring-necked Ducks**, we noticed the gulls suddenly take to the sky. When searching the sky for a possible raptor, Ken and Wes spotted a new lump on the spit - a **Snowy Owl** had landed there!

Rica, Wes Blauvelt



*Blue-throated Barbet, Bangladesh,*  
Muhammad Arif



*Little Owl, Turkmenistan, Mark Chao*

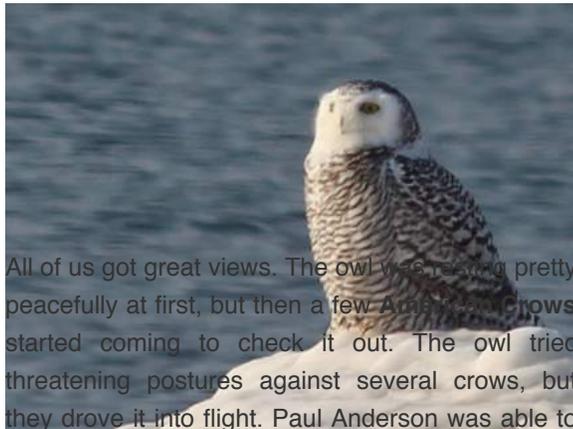


*American Pygmy-Kingfisher, Belize,*  
Diane Morton

## **Great Backyard Bird Count February 16-19, 2018**



**The Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)** is a free, fun, and easy event that engages bird watchers of all ages



All of us got great views. The owl was resting pretty peacefully at first, but then a few American crows started coming to check it out. The owl threatened postures against several crows, but they drove it into flight. Paul Anderson was able to capture a digiscope video of the Owl during this interval (view it on our club Facebook page, [here](#)). We even heard the owl's cries as it flew low over the water to the south, pursued by crows. Seeing this Snowy Owl was a thrilling bonus for the field trip.



After this excitement, we headed out Davis and Mahaney Roads, looking for Horned Larks or Snow Buntings, but finding neither. Continuing toward King Ferry, we turned onto Center Road and were rewarded with about 20 **Snow Buntings** and 40-50 **Horned Larks**, many of them at the edge of the road for good viewing. Luckily auto traffic was nonexistent, so we were all able to get well-positioned for spending some time looking at the birds, even seeing the differences between male and female Horned Larks.



As we left we passed another large flock of Snow Buntings further down the road.

in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of bird populations. Participants are asked to count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the four-day event and report their sightings online at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org). Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from beginning bird watchers to experts, and you can participate from your backyard, or anywhere in the world.

Each checklist submitted during the GBBC helps researchers at the [Cornell Lab of Ornithology](http://Cornell Lab of Ornithology) and the [National Audubon Society](http://National Audubon Society) learn more about how birds are doing, and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, more than 160,000 participants submitted their bird observations online, creating the largest instantaneous snapshot of global bird populations ever recorded.

The 21st annual GBBC will be held Friday, February 16, through Monday, February 19, 2018. Please visit the official website at [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information and be sure to check out the latest [educational and promotional resources](#).

And don't forget the GBBC photo contest! Rules [here](#).

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## **Cayuga Bird Club Meeting March 12, 2018**

Speakers: **Alizé Carrère**, National Geographic Explorer, and **Shawn Billerman**, NSF Postdoctoral Fellow, Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Title: ***Adapt and Thrive: Creatively Living in a Climate Changed World***

**Alizé Carrère** is a National Geographic Explorer researching and documenting climate change adaptation by humans, in practice. She completed her B.A. at McGill University in Environmental Sciences and International Development and then she spent time living in Panama before

We took a snack break at the Corner Store in King Ferry and then went on to Aurora. One **Bald Eagle** was perched in the tree with the eagle's nest near Poplar Ridge Road and Route 90. A **Northern Flicker** and **Red-bellied Woodpecker** were active in the trees near the pullout. Further on, at the Aurora Post Office parking area, we scoped the lake and added **Horned Grebes** to our list.

We still had time to make it up to Union Springs to look through the ducks on the North Mill Pond. Among the many Redheads were **Bufflehead**, **Gadwall**, **American Wigeon**, and a **Hooded Merganser**.

We really enjoyed this trip; we had good looks at waterfowl in good light and success with the winter field birds, in addition to the exciting drama of the Snowy Owl at Myers Point! Thanks to everyone who joined us for a great outing.

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## **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](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 via email the monthly Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter, from September through June. Newsletter submissions may be sent to Diane Morton, [newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org](mailto: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](mailto:newsletter@cayugabirdclub.org) to your email contacts.

returning to McGill to complete an M.Sc. in Bioresource Engineering. With support from National Geographic, Alizé Carrère has been documenting case studies in places such as Madagascar, Bangladesh, India, Norway and the United States to create a web series that reveals human ingenuity and resourcefulness in the face of environmental adversity. The first episode recently premiered at the Telluride Mountain Film Festival, documenting sea level rise in Bangladesh and examining how farmers are adapting by building floating gardens and other buoyant infrastructure. It won the Norman Vaughan Indomitable Spirit Award.

**Shawn Billerman** joined the Cornell Lab of Ornithology in November 2016 as an NSF postdoctoral fellow after completing his PhD at the University of Wyoming. For his PhD, Shawn studied a hybrid zone between Red-naped and Red-breasted Sapsuckers, investigating the mechanisms that have contributed to observed shifts in the hybrid zone over the past 100 years. Prior to graduate school at Wyoming, Shawn completed his BSc at Cornell University. For his postdoctoral research, Shawn is working to understand the factors that influence patterns of speciation on a broad scale. He is coauthor of the book *Bird Families of the World: An Invitation to the Spectacular Diversity of Birds*.

### **Spring Field Ornithology**



The Cornell Lab's [Spring Field Ornithology course \(SFO\)](#) is taking place from **March 28th – May 20th**.

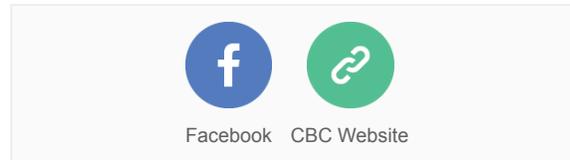
**SFO** is an Ithaca-area tradition that has helped thousands of people learn about birds and birding over the past four-plus decades. It is also a great

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](#).



way to get to know the birding community and the birding hotspots around the area. Designed for all skill levels, the course has two main sections plus a pair of overnight trips.

- **Wednesday night lectures**, including a visit to the bird collection of the Cornell Museum of Vertebrates and a nighttime 'owl prowl'.
- **Saturday or Sunday field trips** to regional birding hotspots such as Braddock Bay Bird Observatory, Derby Hill Hawk Watch, Montezuma, Sapsucker Woods and Greensprings Natural Cemetery.
- **An overnight and a weekend trip** to birding meccas: Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge and Magee Marsh, Ohio.

**Dr. Steve Kress**, VP for Bird Conservation for National Audubon Society, returns to teach the course, joined by a host of guest lecturers from around the Lab. A cadre of local birding experts lead the weekend trips. Visit <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/sfo> to watch a video about the course, look at photos, review the course schedule and enroll, and learn about the offerings. Early bird discounts apply through February 5th!

Contact Marc Devokaitis at [mjd356@cornell.edu](mailto:mjd356@cornell.edu) or see the links below for more information: [Full schedule](#), [Online portal](#).

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### **Montezuma Audubon Center Winter Programs**



Are you looking for fun and exciting activities this winter for your friends and family? The Montezuma Audubon Center's programs are a great way to

explore our winter wonderland, the birds we all love and their habitats. Join us for hot cocoa and snowshoe programs to explore the wild side of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex in the snow. Hop in our van and tour Montezuma and Cayuga Lake to experience songbirds, raptors, and waterfowl who use these Important Birds Areas. Don't miss the live owls that will be the stars of our Owl Prowl program. You can also rent snowshoes from us to explore the winter landscape on your own. Programs will go on with or without snow. Space is limited and **registration is required for all programs**. Please call 315-365-3588 or e-mail [montezuma@audubon.org](mailto:montezuma@audubon.org).

For more detailed information on the programs below, as well as other winter programs at the MAC, visit the [Montezuma Audubon Center website](#).

**Feb. 3** 10:00 am-12:00 pm **Nature of Montezuma Lecture Series: Bird Banding with Dr. John Van Niel**

**Feb.10** 10:00 am - 12:00 pm and 2:00 - 4:00 pm **Sweetheart Snowshoe & Bird Friendly Chocolate Tasting**

**Feb. 15** 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm **Montezuma Raptor Van Tour**

**Feb. 24** 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm **Birds, Binocs & Beers**

**Mar. 3** 12:00 pm - 3:00 pm **Owl Dissection & Discussion Workshop**

**Mar. 3** 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm **Hot Cocoa and Snowshoe Night Hike**

**Mar. 10** 10:00 am - 12:00 pm **Nature of Montezuma Lecture Series: Glacial Geology of the Finger Lakes Region**

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## **2018: The Year of the Bird**

To mark the 100th Anniversary of the Migratory Species Act, 2018 has been designated the **Year of the Bird**. The National Audubon Society, National Geographic, BirdLife International and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology have partnered in a yearlong celebration of birds designed to help the public make a commitment to protecting birds for the next 100 years. Learn how you can take meaningful action each month to make the world a better place for birds.

Learn more at the [Year of the Birds website](#) or at the Audubon' Society's [introduction](#) to the Year of the Birds.

*"If you take care of birds, you take care of most of the environmental problems in the world."*

-Thomas Lovejoy

Biologist and Godfather of Biodiversity

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**Registration is open for the 2018 Ithaca Native Landscape Symposium.**

The symposium will be held March 2-3 at Cinemapolis Theater in Ithaca. Learn about creating Backyard Habitat Havens from speaker Marie Read, Dealing with Resident Landscape Geese from Paul Curtis, Maintaining Dynamic Native Landscapes by Larry Weaner, and more.

For the full speaker schedule and to register, visit the [INLS website](#).

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