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Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter - March 2016

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Cayuga Bird Club

March 2016

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Calendar

Mar. 5 (depending on the weather)
Field Trip Up the Lake
 7:30 am - 4:30 pm, Meet at Lab of O.
 (or at the Cornell Dairy Bar at 7:15 am)
 Leader: John Confer

Mar. 9 Opening Reception
 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm, Lansing Community Library

Cayuga Bird Club Meeting, March 14

Speaker: Anastasia Dalziell, Cornell Lab of Ornithology



Strange Tales of a Curious Bird: Recent Research on the Superb Lyrebird

The male Superb Lyrebird is world famous for its remarkable ability to mimic natural and human-made

sounds. Postdoc Anastasia Dalziell traveled to the forests of southeastern Australia to study lyrebird mimicry and found that, contrary to early suggestions, male lyrebirds are highly selective about when and what sounds they mimic. She will also discuss the association between vocal mimicry and dance, along with other findings that challenge our understanding about the evolution of complex communication in animals.



The meeting will be held at the Cornell Laboratory of

Photography by Marie Read
Our Feathered Neighbors: Birds of Salt Point and Lansing

Mar. 13 Field Trip Up the Lake

8:00 am- 4:00 pm, Meet at Lab of O.
 Leader: Suan Yong

Mar. 14 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

7:30 pm, Lab of Ornithology
 Speaker: Anastasia Dalziell
 Strange tales of a curious bird: recent research on the Superb Lyrebird

Apr. 10 *The Messenger* movie

4:30 pm, Cornell Cinema

Apr. 11 Cayuga Bird Club Meeting

7:30 pm, Lab of Ornithology
 Speaker: Jillian Liner, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon New York

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

Upcoming Field Trips in March

A trip up to Montezuma NWR and back is planned for **March 5**, led by John Confer. If the weather looks like it will be much better on Sunday, the trip may be postponed to March 6. We will leave at **7:30 am** from the Lab of O. with a quick pick up at Cornell's Dairy Bar at **7:15 am**. Any changes will be posted to the Cayugabirds listserv.

On Sunday, **March 13**, Suan Yong will also lead a full day trip up to Montezuma and back, leaving the Lab of O at **8 am**, returning at 4 pm. Contact Suan at suan.yong@gmail.com if you have questions about this trip.

These trips are open to all. Dress warmly, with extra layers, for standing out in the cold. Bring snacks and/or lunch and something to drink. We will also make a stop so people can purchase food. Bring a scope if you have one. Carpools will be arranged when the group gathers for the trip; passengers should offer to contribute toward the cost of gas.

Ornithology. The evening will begin with cookies and conversation at 7:15 pm. Cayuga Bird Club business begins at 7:30 pm, followed by the speaker's presentation. All are welcome.



From the President



Happy March, Cayuga Bird Club Members!

March usually means the beginning of the end of a long NY winter and first inkling of a great bird migration season. I am sure of no surprise to many of you, evidence of migration and other signs of spring have arrived early at my house. I had 14 Red-winged Blackbirds descend on my feeders the other day during a snow squall. Woodpeckers of several species are drumming away in my local woodlot. While walking to work about a week ago, I just had to stop and watch a bird rumble in the street. Black-capped Chickadees were sparring in pairs – right in the middle of the road – as were twosomes of Tufted Titmice and White-breasted Nuthatches. Even female Downy woodpeckers were chasing and scolding each other while males of the species did the same thing on an adjacent tree. It seems like the birds know that spring is soon upon us.

While I certainly get excited about spring and what it means to me as a birder, I also get excited about all the incredible things going on with your bird club. Some people have told me that they think of the Club as a group that leads field trips and hosts a speaker seminar at its monthly meeting. That's true, of course, but the Club is a lot more than that. Take a peek inside this newsletter and see all the amazing things in which your Club is involved.

If you are interested in the combination of art, music, and birds in one of our favorite local habitats, check out a photo exhibition gala opening from 6-8 pm on March 9th at the Lansing Community Center. "Our Feathered Neighbors: Birds of Salt Point and Lansing"

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

Listed below are Cayuga Lake Basin 2016 first records reported during the month of February, 2016.

Feb. 1 Black Vulture
 Feb. 2 Red-necked Grebe
 Feb. 2 Eastern Phoebe
 Feb. 2 Baltimore Oriole
 Feb. 5 Golden Eagle
 Feb. 9 Western Tanager
 Feb. 14 Savannah Sparrow
 Feb. 28 Eurasian Wigeon

2016 count to date: 132 species

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

February Cayuga Bird Club meeting minutes recorded by Colleen Richards are available at the [CBC website](#).

Our Feathered Neighbors: Birds of Salt Point and Lansing



Myers Park, Salt Point, Cayuga Lake and the Lansing countryside are home to beautiful birds that lead fascinating lives. The Lansing Community Library will host an exhibition featuring colorful songbirds, owls, hawks and water birds photographed in Lansing by renowned wildlife photographer **Marie Read**. The exhibit will run through the months of March and April. Come to the Gala Opening, Wednesday, **March 9, 6:00-8:00 pm** to meet and chat with the photographer. Refreshments will be served. Free and open to the public.

It will feature works by Club member Marie Reed. Your Club has been one of the groups making Salt Point a great place for birds and birders.

If you want to help with conservation activities, you can join other Cayuga Bird Club members as we search for and map the location of Canada Goose nests in the vicinity of Stewart Park as part of the overall goose management planning process for the southern end of Cayuga Lake. Please contact me if you want to help locate and map nests or participate in the planning process.

If you like outdoor shows where you can visit booths reflecting many of the outdoor endeavors available here in central New York, come visit the Cortland Sportsmen's Show at the Smith Center in Cortland on Saturday March 5. I'll be staffing a booth for both your Club and the Lab or Ornithology. Stop by and say hello.

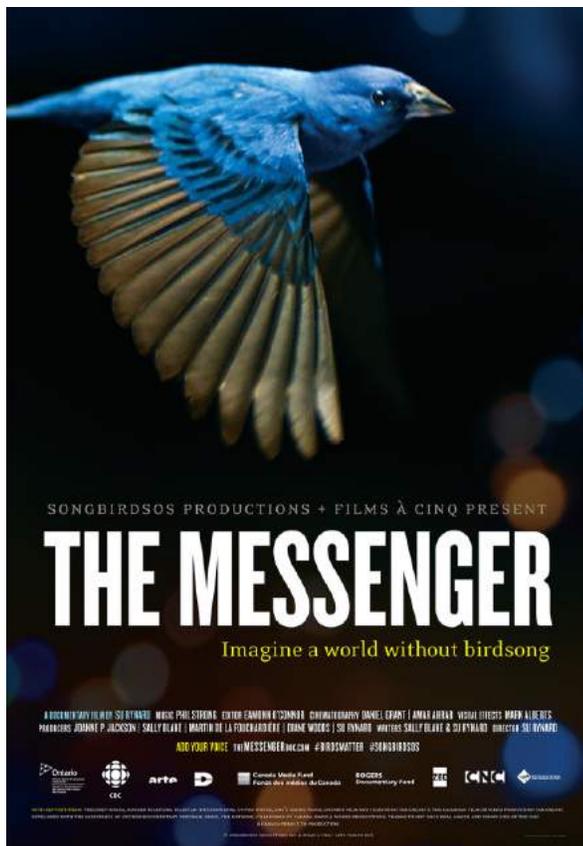
Finally, I want to give a big shout out to the many Club members who spent substantial time recently showing passers-by of all ages the Western Tanager that has been wintering on the Cornell Campus. I got to witness first-hand the smile on faces of little kids and adults alike when they viewed the bird through scopes and binoculars of Club members in attendance. Thanks to all of you for reaching out to others in the community in this way.

Check out the calendar of events on the Club webpage www.cayugabirdclub.org if you want to see all of the amazing things in which your Club is involved. We always welcome your ideas for other things we might do. Drop me a line with your ideas.

Happy Birding,

Jody Enck

The Lansing Community Library is located at 27 Auburn Road (Rte 34/34B), Lansing NY. This event is co-sponsored by the Friends of Salt Point.



[The Messenger,](#)

a new documentary by award-winning filmmaker Su Rynard chronicles the struggle of songbirds worldwide to survive in turbulent environmental conditions brought about by humans. *The Messenger* explores our deep-seated connection to birds and warns that the uncertain fate of songbirds might mirror our own. Moving from the northern reaches of the Boreal Forest to the base of Mount Ararat to the urban streets of New York *The Messenger* brings us face-to-face with a remarkable variety of human-made perils that have devastated thrushes, warblers, orioles, tanagers, grosbeaks and many other airborne music-makers.

In collaboration between Cornell University and the Cayuga Bird Club, *The Messenger* will be shown at Cornell Cinema on **April 10, 4:30**



[Field Trip Report - Around the Lake](#)

by Bob McGuire

With the continuing unseasonably warm temperature and a forecast of light southern wind, thirteen folks joined me for our first-of-year around-the-lake field trip on February 7th. The lack of ice on the lake and snow in the fields meant that the birds, especially the ducks, were spread out and going to be difficult to find. Altogether we saw/heard some 55 species, and a few folks even got life birds!

The lake at Myers was home to the continuing flock of **Common Goldeneye** and large numbers of **Mallards**. The first real highlight came at Ladoga where we quickly spotted a small group of **White-winged Scoters** and a couple of **Common Loons**. From there we headed north with a stop along Rafferty Road for close looks at **Horned Larks** - and they really DO have horns!

The lake at the Wells College boathouse was nearly calm making it relatively easy to pick out the 20 **Horned Grebes** offshore as well as another loon.

With reports of open water in the main pool at the refuge, we climbed the tower - to find only distant ducks and a few swans. Several of us were fortunate to hear the brief chatter call of the continuing **Marsh Wren**.

There was a good representation of **Brown-headed**

pm. Our own local experts Bill Evans and Andy Farnsworth, who pioneered studies of night flight patterns of migratory songbirds, will be present for a post-film discussion of issues raised in the movie.

Tickets will be \$5.50. However, we will discuss the possibility of getting discounted group tickets at the next Cayuga Bird Club meeting. If more than 20 people sign up in advance, the ticket cost will be reduced to \$4.00 for those in the group.

Many thanks to Meena Haribal for her efforts to bring this documentary to Ithaca.

Volunteer Opportunities at Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Become a volunteer at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology! If you love birds and want to be around others who share your interests, you are invited to join the new Visitor Center volunteer corps. Opportunities include helping with youth education programs, leading tours, assisting with outreach, and helping in the Adelson Library.

The first step in becoming a volunteer is to attend the initial information session on **March 24, 7:00 pm**, at the Lab of Ornithology. For more information about requirements, training, and benefits of becoming a volunteer, contact Lisa Kopp at lkopp@cornell.edu or call 607-254-2174.

Included below are community announcements that may be of interest to Cayuga Bird Club members.

Birdhouse Building for Danby's Dotson Park

Saturday, March 12, 1-4 pm

Danby Town Hall

Join other birding enthusiasts, novice and

Cowbirds in a flock of **European Starlings** at the Potato Building along Rt 31 and, even more exciting, two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** in a large flock of gulls feeding in one of the flooded fields.

Following a report of Sandhill Cranes on Armitage Road, we checked numerous fallow fields in the vicinity - and came up empty. But we did come across a family of **Trumpeter Swans**, easily identified because they were in a field all by themselves and then through the usual field marks (pointed forehead feather patch and extensive black lores).

We finally caught up with a large group of ducks at Cayuga Lake State Park and had fun picking through the milling masses looking for the few **American Wigeons, Scaup, Ruddy Ducks** and - a single distant **Eared Grebe**. Strange place for that guy, but we had lots of good eyes on the bird and were able to definitively confirm the ID.

Our last stop was along Seybold Road for the staked-out **Snowy Owl**. But it was not where it was supposed to be - on the gas wellhead east of the road, and there was a moment of panic that we had come all that way for nothing. Susan Danskin had the presence of mind to look around and spotted it on a fence post off in the distance.

Except, then, for the cranes we finished up by finding all of the promised birds and concluded what I heard later from some participants was a good trip!

Note: I am NOT reporting all of the birds we saw. I did not keep notes, and these are the just the highlights that came to mind as I put this together.

experienced, to construct bird houses for Eastern Bluebirds. We'll measure, cut, drill, and assemble bird houses to install in Dotson Park. After installing them on a future day, we will organize interested volunteers to monitor the boxes during the spring and early summer nesting period as part of [Nestwatch](#), a Citizen Science program. And we'll learn a bit about these native birds and why they deserve special attention. We welcome volunteers with carpentry skills and equipment. Contact achristie@danbycc.org to volunteer or for more information about the event. Dress to work outside. Refreshments provided.



Field Trip Report - Winter Birds

by Diane Morton

Eight people joined Ken and me for a half-day field trip to look for birds on the lake and in the fields of Lansing on February 20th. It was a gorgeous day! So different from our windy and freezing scouting day. Today the sky was blue, the light was excellent, and temperature rose into the upper 50's by the end of the trip!

We started out at East Shore Park, where we mostly observed **Common Mergansers** and **Common Goldeneye**. Looking across the lake, we saw that most of the ducks were concentrated on the west side. We were glad that we had asked permission from Elaina M. to bring the group to her property overlooking the southwest corner of the lake. This is where thousands of *Aythya* had spread out. The ducks there glowed in the sunlight; in addition to the huge numbers of **Redheads**, we saw many handsome **Canvasbacks**, lesser numbers of both **Greater** and **Lesser Scaup**, and a few scattered **Ring-necked Ducks**. Closer to shore we saw a single **American Wigeon** among the **Mallards** and **Black Ducks**. John Confer spotted a distant male **Long-tailed Duck** that all of us were able to see between its diving disappearances. A young **Bald Eagle** was at the ice edge. When it flew up, a wave of ducks rose off the lake and swirled in the sky in front of us. So many birds in the sky at once! But none of them resolved into the Tufted Duck that was reported on the lake this week.

We next went to Myers Point, Salt Point and Ladoga. While the lake was not too rough at Myers,



Ithaca Native Landscape Symposium **March 4-5 at Cinemopolis**

This event is intended for anyone with an interest in native plants and their use in the landscape—from experts to amateurs, professors to students, practitioners to homeowners and landowners. Walk-in registration is fine if you have not pre-registered.

Presentations of special interest to bird club members include Ron Rorbaugh, Assistant Director, Conservation Science Program, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, speaking on *The Role of Young Forest in Supporting Healthy and Diverse Bird Populations* (including habitat for Golden-winged Warblers), Ernest Williams on *Monarchs, Milkweed and Migration*, and more topics on creating a healthy landscape for wildlife with native plants. A detailed schedule and further information is available at the symposium [website](#).

Audubon film screening

Rara Avis Productions will be hosting a one-time screening of **Audubon** at Cinemapolis Theater on Thursday, **March 17 at 7:00 pm**. After the screening, there will be a special Q&A with John Fitzpatrick, Director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and one of the experts featured in the film. Tickets won't be sold at the theater, but are available in advance at: www.tugg.com/events/92425

Audubon is the story of John James Audubon's adventure across America as he pursued his dream of painting life-size images of all the bird species of America.

John Fitzpatrick is one of the experts featured in the film, and Greg Budney (Collections Development Curator, Macaulay Library) provided most of the bird songs. Tim Barksdale, the cinematographer for the film, has been pursuing birds with a camera for 20 years and has built a foundation of 700 analog and digital media tapes of birds in the Macaulay Library collection at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

RUTH ENGELBRECHT

SCHOLARSHIP: Sponsors a teacher to attend the National Audubon Educator's Workshop on Hog Island, Maine.

**Camp runs from July 17 to July 22,
2016**

Location: Hog Island, ME

Application due: March 7, 2016

there also weren't many birds to see beyond the usual gulls, Mallards and Common Mergansers. We could see a pair of **White-winged Scoters** closer to Salt Point, and moved to that area for better viewing. The scoters were actively diving there, but everyone got excellent looks, as they were fairly close in. The male's white eye mark and bright orange bill stood out sharply in the sunlight. John spotted a lovely male **Wood Duck** here as well. Common Goldeneye were doing their head thrust displays. We also saw a male **Hooded Merganser**. Over at Ladoga, we added **American Coots** and a couple of **Double-crested Cormorants** to our list.

We drove out Lansingville Road to look for field birds—and found them! We stopped for a small flock of **Horned Larks**, and then a larger flock of more than 60 **Snow Buntings** flew up in the same general area.

On our way back, along route 34B near Algerine Road we had a **Rough-legged Hawk** flying overhead. This was a very enjoyable trip with a great group of people on a beautiful day!



White-winged Scoters by Becky Hansen

Field Trip Report - Up the Lake

By Ann Mitchell

Jae, Judy, and Klaus joined me on Sunday, February 21, for an awesome day of birding. The weather was in the high 30's. It was a cloudy day with very little wind. The lake was very calm for most of the day affording

If you or someone you know is an educator who would like to build up a program teaching students about nature and wildlife, please consider applying for the Ruth Engelbrecht Scholarship or sharing it with others. The scholarship is open to all interested educators, especially those teaching in central New York. No experience with birds or the outdoors is required to attend this camp, only an eagerness for providing more environmental education in your classroom and a willingness to use the tips this camp will provide to you.

Send [application](#) to [onodagaaudubonpresident@gmail.com](mailto:nonodagaaudubonpresident@gmail.com).

Inns of Aurora Birding Retreat April 9-11, 2016

For novice birders and wildlife enthusiasts alike, this retreat features guided excursions to birding sites, hands-on workshops, and personal discussions with retreat guides, including Andrea Van Beusichem, Visitor Services Manager for the Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, Chris Lajewski, Center Director for the Montezuma Audubon Center, John Rogers, co-founder of the NYS Bluebird Society, and Marie Read, wildlife photographer and former photography editor at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Visit the [website](#) for the full schedule and registration information.

excellent viewing. Everyone jumped in my car and we started our adventure. The stops and highlights are as follows:

East Shore Marina - 2 **Long-tailed Ducks**. One was particularly beautiful.

Ladoga and the Lighthouse at Myers - 11 **Wood Ducks**, mostly male (unprecedented this early in the season), 2 **Horned Grebes**, 4 **White-winged Scoters**, **American Wigeon**, 1 **Double-crested Cormorant**, 1 **Belted Kingfisher**. While at Ladoga we heard 1 or 2 **Pine Siskins** making their zreeeeeet calls.

Just south of Miliken Station, a dark-phase **Rough-legged Hawk** flew in front of the car, briefly landing in a ditch, then flying to a nearby tree to feast on a newly caught rodent. We watched it for awhile.

Long Point State Park - 4 **Common Loons** and 7 **White-winged Scoters**. There were close to 100 **Red-breasted Mergansers**.

Aurora Boat House - We were treated to super looks at an **Eared Grebe**. It was mixed in with 10 **Horned Grebes**. It was transitioning into breeding plumage and we could see a hint of the yellow wisps by it's eyes.

We did stop at Cayuga to view the many **Tundra Swans** before stopping for lunch and, then continuing around the lake. The ice edge was quite south of Cayuga State Park. We noticed huge rafts of **Snow Geese** in the middle of the lake. One raft was so long we could hardly see the end of it. The last stop of note was Dean's Cove where we saw the continuing **Lesser Black-backed Gull**.

Most of the trip was lake oriented, but we did make a side trip here and there. One trip was to Van Dyne Spoor Road in Savannah and saw lots of **American Robins**, **Cedar Waxwings**, two **Pileated Woodpeckers**, a **Red-bellied**, **Downy** and **Hairy Woodpecker** and a **Northern Flicker**. All in all, it was a great day. Thanks to everyone who came!



Derby Hill Bird Fest, May 14

Volunteers are needed before the festival (hanging posters, planning, advertising, placing road signs, etc.) and/or the day of the festival (2 hour shifts directing traffic, staffing information tables, set-up or take-down, helping with kids' activities, leading nature walks, conducting the scavenger hunt, etc). It is a fun day, so if you can lend a hand, please let us know at BirdFestivalOnAud@gmail.com and we will get back to you ASAP!

Cayuga Bird Club

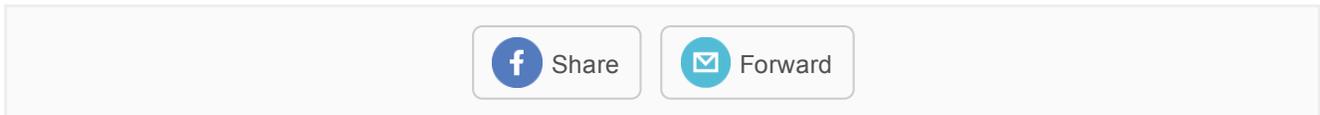
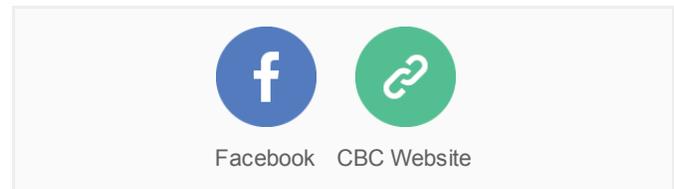
The Cayuga Bird Club meets on the second Monday of each month, September through June, beginning with refreshments at 7:15 p.m. in the Auditorium of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Johnson Center on Sapsucker Woods Road. All meetings and most field trips are free and open to the public. Membership costs \$15 annually per household, \$10 for students, payable in September. To join, send a check (made out to "Cayuga Bird Club") to Cayuga Bird Club Treasurer, c/o Cornell Lab of Ornithology, 159 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, NY 14850. [Online payment option](#) is available at the Cayuga Bird Club website.

Members receive via email the monthly Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter, from September through June. Newsletter submissions may be sent to Diane Morton, cbceditor1@gmail.com. Of particular interest are articles about local bird sightings, bird behavior, 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

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



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