

Cayuga Bird Club Newsletter - March 2019

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Cayuga Bird Club

March 2019

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Calendar

March 3, Field Trip - Around the Lake
Meet at 8am at Stewart Park

March 4, 7:30pm New Perspectives from the Birds-of-Paradise Project

Speaker: Ed Scholes, Director of Research & Interpretation at Macaulay Library, Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Lab of Ornithology Auditorium

Cayuga Bird Club Meeting March 11, 2019

Title: Borneo: A Birding Tour of Sabah, Malaysia
Speakers: Susan Danskin, Diane Morton, Ken Kemphues

Susan Danskin, Ken Kemphues, and Diane Morton traveled to the island of Borneo last summer for a birding tour in the state of Sabah, Malaysia. Borneo's unique geography makes it home to a high number of bird species found nowhere else in the world, plus an amazing diversity of plants, insects, and mammals. Our speakers traveled to the highlands of Mount Kinabalu, lowland rainforest jungles, and coastal wetlands, seeing hundreds of birds, including all eight species of Borneo's hornbills, edible-nest swifts in a large cave, trogons, sunbirds, spiderhunters, blue flycatchers, and the world's largest flower.



Wrinkled Hornbill photo by Diane Morton

Bornean Orangutans, Proboscis Monkeys, Pygmy Elephants, and Red Giant Flying Squirrels were among the many mammals encountered along the way. The diversity of

The Birds-of-Paradise Project uses the tools and technology of natural history filmmaking for scientific discovery, public engagement and forest conservation in the New Guinea region. Learn more about recent field expeditions and new initiatives including the discovery of a newly recognized species, novel insights on bizarre behaviors and how the Project has begun a new initiative to help Indonesian New Guinea protect its remaining forests.

Mar. 7, 2:30-5 pm, Winter Raptor Birding Van Tour, Montezuma Audobon Center

The Finger Lakes Region is home to many migratory raptors. Fee: \$8/child; \$15/adult. Pre-paid reservation required. Call 315-365-3588 or e-mail montezuma@audubon.org.

March 9, Field Trip - West Side of the Lake

Meet at 8am at the turtle at the Ithaca Children's Garden

March 11, Cayuga Bird Club Meeting
Borneo: A Birding Tour of Sabah, Malaysia
Speakers: Susan Danskin, Diane Morton & Ken Kemphues

March 12, Marie Read Book Presentation

7pm at Kendal Auditorium

March 23, Field Trip - Around the Lake

Meet at 7:30 at Stewart Park

March 30, Nest Box Build and Paint

Stewart Park Garage

April 7, Field Trip - Dryden Lake

Meet at 7:30 am at Lab of O

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

Upcoming Field Trips

Sunday, March 3 - Around the Lake, led by Suan Yong

8:00am – 4:30pm

Meet at Stewart Park, east end

Join Suan Yong on a full day trip around Cayuga Lake. Dress very warmly and bring a scope if you have one. Bring a lunch and/or snacks and a beverage. We'll make

life in the protected forests they visited was truly remarkable; however, much of Borneo's forested area is threatened by rapid expansion of palm oil plantations.

Diane Morton is president, Ken Kemphues the current treasurer, and Susan Danskin past-treasurer of the Cayuga Bird Club. All three are avid birders; their trip to Borneo was for each their first time birding in Asia.

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.

From the President

Diane Morton



At our last Cayuga Bird Club meeting, club members voted unanimously to direct \$2500 of club funds to projects proposed by our Conservation Action Committee for the south end of Cayuga Lake. These projects include installing nest boxes and improving habitat for birds

at the Jetty Woods/Lighthouse Point area, as well as installation of a Purple Martin house. We'll also be engaging in more outreach to the public with a nest-box building workshop for children and public walks at Stewart Park this spring.

A number of club members have already gotten involved in these initiatives and are starting to map habitat at Lighthouse Point, to identify small areas for removal of invasive species and replacement with native plants that will provide better food and shelter for both nesting and migratory birds. If you'd like to help with this effort, or any of the planned projects of the Conservation Action committee, please contact Jody Enck at jwe4@cornell.edu.

Many of us can also take small steps to create more bird-friendly habitat in our own yards, and spring is the time to get to work on this. Gardens can provide an oasis for birds to obtain food, and, often, also a place to

a stop to purchase food as well. We plan to be back 4-5 pm.

Saturday, March 9, West Side of the Lake, led by Ken Haas

8:00am – 12:30pm

Meet at the Turtle at the Ithaca Children's Garden

Join Ken Haas for a half-day field trip on the West side of Cayuga Lake to look for waterfowl and field birds of late winter. Meet at the Ithaca Children's Garden parking lot by the big turtle to car pool from there. A brief look around that area before we go off to Allen H. Treman State Marine Park to look for field and water birds. Then we'll head up Rt.89 North to Sheldrake Point, which should be good for waterfowl. If time permits, we'll stop in at Dean's Cove before returning to the Children's Garden parking lot by about 12:30 PM.

Saturday, March 23, Around the Lake, led by Meena Haribal

7:30am – 4:00pm

Meena Haribal will lead a full-day trip up the lake with a focus on waterfowl. Meet at the east end of Stewart Park at 7:30 am for carpooling. Bring something to eat and drink; we will also make a stop to purchase food for lunch. Dress warmly for the weather. If you have a spotting scope, please bring it.

Sunday, April 7 - Dryden Lake, led by Suan Yong

7:30am – 12:00pm

Suan Yong will lead a half-day trip to Dryden Lake, one of our area's birding hotspots. This is a good spot for ducks and other water birds as well as a variety of sparrows and songbirds. Meet at Cornell Lab of Ornithology parking lot at 7:30am. Dress warmly according to the weather. Bring a snack and something to drink and a spotting scope if you have one.

These field trips are open to all. For up-to-date information about our field trips and other events, see our web calendar at cayugabirdclub.org.

raise their young. By adding native plants even to a small patio garden, people can help birds find more insects, fruits, and seeds that help them thrive.

Last fall my husband Ken and I added a some viburnums to our backyard; these shrubs might host caterpillars in the growing season and later the fruit will provide food for Cedar Waxwings, cardinals, robins and other birds. We've removed non-native buckthorn and bush honeysuckle, and will select native plants, perhaps spicebush and winterberry, to replace them. I've found the [Audubon Native Plants Database](#) to be a very useful resource for learning more about bird-friendly native plants, as well as our own Cayuga Bird Club publication, *Native Plants for Native Birds* (written by Joel Baines, with photos by David Ruppert).

It is also great to learn from other people who are experienced with using plants that grow well in our area to improve garden habitat for birds. Cayuga Bird Club members Tracy McLellan and Ann Manzano are Master Gardeners who have designed their gardens with birds in mind - and have beautiful spaces for both birds and people to enjoy. They will be contributing a column to this newsletter to help us learn more about ways to improve our own landscapes for birds.

Good birding,

Diane

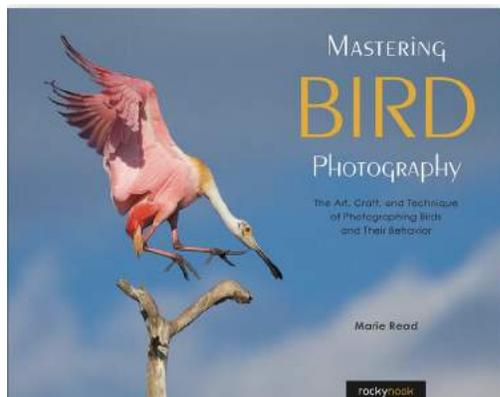
News from the Conservation Action Committee

Jody Enck

At the February Club meeting, membership voted to allocate \$2500 of Club funds to the committee for conservation efforts this spring. We are buying Purple Martin and Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes with some of the funds. We also are buying a half-dozen pairs of binoculars to use on community bird walks that will be held every Saturday starting in April. We also will be using some of the funds for other habitat management and restoration work in Renwick Woods and Lighthouse Point/Jetty Woods.

Marie Read - Mastering Bird Photography

The Campus Club at Cornell will host photographer Marie Read on Tuesday, March 12th, 7:00pm at the Kendal Auditorium. Marie will introduce her new book, *Mastering Bird Photography: The Art, Craft and Technique of Photographing Birds and their Behavior*.



Marie Read grew up in England, began wildlife photography in East Africa, and now lives near Ithaca, NY. Her images and articles are featured in magazines, books and calendars worldwide. While pursuing photography part time, Marie worked at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology as photo and illustrations editor, turning to full-time photography and writing in 2005.

Location and directions: The event will be at Kendal Auditorium, 2230 N. Triphammer Road. Enter the Kendal campus at Savage Farm Drive from N. Triphammer Road. Turn left when you come to the ring road to go to the south lobby. The visitor parking lot is on your right and the entrance is under the portico. The hallway on the left will lead you to the auditorium just past the coatroom.

Field Trip Report - Around the Lake - February 10

Bob McGuire

Who would have thought that 24 people would show up for a winter field trip? Well they did, and from what I heard, some of

All are invited to participate a community nest box build at Stewart Park on Saturday March 30th to help put together and paint the nest boxes. That day we also will be taking part in the annual clean-up of Stewart Park and surrounding areas organized by Friends of Stewart Park and the City of Ithaca. We will concentrate our clean-up efforts in Renwick Woods and Lighthouse Point woods.



Photo by Jody Enck

On Saturday February 23rd, seven of us met with forester, Don Schaufler, for a ramble through the brambles at Lighthouse Point/Jetty Woods. We developed a rough habitat map, noted the species of overstory trees, and got a sense of where invasive plants need to be removed and replaced with native species. We also looked for areas where we will put up the Prothonotary Warbler nest boxes.

If you have any questions, or want to get involved, please contact committee chair, Jody Enck by email at jodyenck@gmail.com.

Gardening for Birds

Tracy McLellan and Ann Manzano

This is the first of a series on gardening for birds. We are Master Gardeners and answer calls on the Growline at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County. One of us had a call from a woman who wanted an insect identified, because she was worried that it might be harming her plants. I told her what it was and

them had even more fun than I did! It was a great mix of seasoned birders (with lots of scopes), beginners (one from way out of town), and a family with children. We were blessed with normal winter temperatures (not overly cold) but even more importantly, NO wind and even a bit of sunshine. We got all the way around Cayuga Lake, hit most of the hot spots, and got home just a little after 4pm.

From East Shore Park we scoped the gulls loafing on the ice and picked out five species: Herring, Ring-billed, Great Black-backed, Lesser Black-backed, and a young Glaucous Gull. Then, between Myers, Aurora Bay, and Union Springs' Mill Pond we managed to see most of the expected waterfowl. That included several Long-tailed Ducks, courting Common Goldeneye and Red-breasted Mergansers, and a dozen plus Horned Grebes.



Photo by Diane Morton

Along the way we searched in vain for Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs in the fields and ultimately managed one good sighting of a Horned Lark.

For some reason that I don't quite understand (!), finding a Snowy Owl was extremely important to some members of our group. Given that we had several children along, we gave it an extra effort. Thanks to Dave Nutter's persistence we were able to get everyone on a distant, white lump in the corn stubble of the Mucklands, with a Peregrine Falcon perched nearby. But that wasn't enough. We spotted a second Snowy Owl along the runway at the Finger Lakes Airport - life

assured her that it was not doing much, if any, harm. She did not seem convinced. Then I told her to think of it as bird food. Oh yes, she replied, we feed the birds. Bird feeders are great for birds, especially in the winter, and they provide opportunities for us to see our backyard birds up close. However, for the success of breeding birds, it is important to have a good, healthy population of insects. For example, hummingbirds will eagerly consume sugar water from feeders and the sugary nectar of flowers, but the young are fed much more nutritious insects.

Many bird populations are declining in number, and the numbers of insects have been decreasing in recent years. This does not mean that one of those things has caused the other, but a decrease in insects in the environment is not good for birds. Habitats are being modified, and one of the greatest modifications is housing development. Maintaining areas around houses that are good habitat for birds and insects will ensure some places for some birds to thrive.

The vast majority of insect species found in gardens are harmless to humans and plants. Some are beneficial, in that they prey on or parasitize pest insects, or pollinate flowers. A small number actually do harm plants, usually only a problem when they become abundant. A tiny number, mosquitoes and ticks (not insects, but close), can bother humans. Many of the callers to the GrowLine seem to want a world without any jointed-leg creatures. But that would be a world without birds, and no one has been asking for that.



birds for a few of us. Our last stop was Sheldrake Point for a pair of Common Loons - a first of the year bird for some.

Field Trip Report - Winter Finches - February 16

Matt Young

It was a pretty tough day with wintry conditions of light snow, north winds 15-20mph, and wind chills in the single digits. These conditions proved tough since all waterfowl seemed to be in protected areas on local lakes. We checked the south end of Skaneateles, Owasco and Cayuga lakes, and the only waterfowl seen were both merganser species, a few Mallards and American Black Ducks, and a few Common Goldeneye. There was a 100-200 gulls at the south end of Cayuga Lake and we didn't see anything noteworthy outside the three common species.

The best stop of the day was our first stop in Scott at a private residence where we saw 152 Evening Grosbeaks.



Evening Grosbeaks photo by Kevin Murphy

This location was very birdy with Tufted Titmice, Black-capped Chickadees, Cedar Waxwings, Dark-eyed Juncos, Hairy, Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and Blue Jays, American Crows, and a few American Goldfinches. A Common Raven could occasionally be heard in the distance too. We also stopped at the "Hovel Chalet" house in Summerhill where we saw

House wren with caterpillar by Marie Read

Bird-friendly gardening is really insect-friendly gardening. Birds tend to be generalists in terms of the species they eat; most herbivorous insects specialize on one or a few species of plant. Native plants are the best for providing insects for birds because they have native insects, while many garden plants that originated in other parts of the world came here without their pests. Bird-friendly plants are those that provide food in the form of seeds and fruits, as well as those that harbor insects, particularly caterpillars, which are the young stages of butterflies and moths, that most of the birds in our gardens feed to their young.

Future installments of this series will cover choosing plants for a bird-friendly garden, gardening practice, and organic gardening and pesticides. If you have questions about gardening, please contact the GrowLine at 607 272 2292 or growline1@gmail.com. The [CCE Tompkins website](#) and various Cornell departments have lots of good gardening information.

Cayuga Bird Club Meeting April 8

Title: Mistakes Happen! Hybridization in Wood Warblers
Speaker: David Toews, Ph.D., Dept of Biology, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA

Dr. David Toews has worked on studying hybrid zones in wood warblers for over ten years. He will discuss what he has learned about avian evolution by studying these hybrid zones, as well some notable rare, unusual and initially mysterious hybridization events that he has discovered by using new genetic methods.

Minutes

of the February 11, 2019 Cayuga Bird Club meeting are available on the Cayuga Bird Club [website](#).

Cayuga Bird Club

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

another handful of Evening Grosbeaks and a low flyover of a male Cooper's Hawk.

Field Trip Report - Around the Lake Again - February 24

Bob McGuire

In spite of the dire weather prediction for today, four folks showed up to join me for a drive around the lake. The wind remained moderate (not the 50mph+ gusts I had feared), and the temperature actually rose a bit.

We started out just north of Stewart Park, scoping the gulls on the ice. The best bird would have been the juvenile Glaucous Gull that I had noticed on my way in, but it had left by the time we all got there - probably on its way to breakfast at the compost piles.

Our next stop was Myers Park, where we were rewarded with a first-of-year Killdeer along the creek, several lingering Long-tailed Ducks and White-winged Scoters. It was there that we received an rare bird alert of Bohemian Waxwing in Groton. It was going to be a life bird for several of us, so off we went. By the time we got there, unfortunately, the Bohemian had disappeared, even though a large flock of Cedar Waxwings was still hanging around.

We then headed into farm country to look for buntings and longspurs. There was a flock of some 500 Snow Buntings actively foraging along Davis Road, but we were unable to pick out anything different.

Aurora Bay held large numbers of Canada Geese and a good sampling of ducks (goldeneye, Bufflehead, Red-breasted Merganser) but, surprisingly, no Horned Grebes.

We found a few Green-winged Teal along the shore to the north of Frontenac Park. There was nothing out of the ordinary on the ponds in Union Springs nor on the

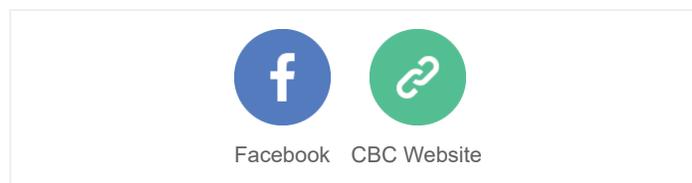
The Cayuga Bird Club meets on the second Monday of each month, September through June, beginning with refreshments at 7:15pm in the Auditorium of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Johnson Center on Sapsucker Woods Road. All meetings and most field trips are free and open to the public. Membership costs \$15 annually per household, \$10 for students, payable in September. Payment may be made via Paypal at cayugabirdclub.org 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 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

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water at Mud Lock.

Next, we checked the Finger Lakes airport for Snowy Owls (none) and the area of the quarry for Gyrfalcon (nothing). The view from Sheldrake Park was unremarkable. And from there we ran ahead of the cold front (wind and rain) all the way home.

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

Cayuga Lake Basin birds reported in February are listed below.

Greater White-fronted Goose
Field Sparrow
Eastern Meadowlark
Kildeer
Golden Eagle

**2019 year count so far:
124 species**

Details of the species listed can be found on the [CBC website](#).

Thanks to Dave Nutter for compiling these records for the club.



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