



# Cayuga Bird Club

## November 2019

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## Calendar

Nov 1 (Fri), 6pm-10pm: Owling Trip with Bob McGuire & Suan Yong. Meet at Lab of O.

Nov 4 (Mon), 7:30pm: Cornell Lab Seminar. Dr. Ken Rosenberg, *3 Billion Birds Gone: The Bird Crisis and What We Can Do About It*. Lab of O.

Nov 10 (Sun), 6:30-8:40am: Loon Watch with Suan Yong. Taughannock Point (south entrance, northernmost point by creek).

Nov 11 (Mon), 7:30pm: CBC meeting. Speaker: Christina Hoh, *Monitoring New York's Winter Raptors*. Lab of O.

Nov 16 (Sat), 8am-noon: Field Trip with Paul Anderson. Meet at Lab of O.

Nov 21 (Thu), 7pm: *Harmful Algal Blooms on Cayuga Lake* presentation, Lansing Town Hall.

Nov 23 (Sat), 7:30am-5pm: Field Trip

## Cayuga Bird Club Meeting Monitoring New York's Winter Raptors



**Speaker: Christina Hoh,  
NYSDEC Biologist, Avon, NY  
Monday, November 11, 2019  
7:30pm, Cornell Lab of Ornithology**

Upstate New York is known for its harsh winters, but some raptor species specialize in cold and snowy weather and spend their winters right here in our communities. These charismatic raptors, including Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls, are under a wide range of threats, and NYSDEC, its partners, and volunteers work together to monitor these nomadic birds across their winter range in New York. We will discuss these birds' natural history, current trends, our surveys and discoveries, and how you can take part in monitoring efforts.

*About the Speaker:* Christina first came upstate to attend RIT, where she earned a B.S. in Biology and was introduced to avian research through

to Franklin Mountain, Oneonta, with Gary Kohlenberg. Meet at East Hill Plaza. Rain date Nov 24.

Nov 24 (Sun), 10:30-11:30am: eBird Workshop, with Diane Morton and Phil McNeil. Meet at Lab of O Visitor Center Auditorium.

Nov 30-Dec 1 (Sat-Sun), Overnight Trip to Conowingo Dam, Maryland, with Carl Steckler. Email [cjs9@cornell.edu](mailto:cjs9@cornell.edu) if interested.

Dec 7 (Sat), 8am-4:30pm: Field Trip Up the Lake with Ken Kempfues and Diane Morton. Meet at Stewart Park (east end).

Dec 9 (Mon), 7:30pm: CBC meeting. Speaker: Jody Enck, *What Makes a Birder a Birder?* Lab of O.

Jan 1, 2020: Ithaca Christmas Bird Count

Feb 14-23, 2020: CBC Trip to Costa Rica.

Nov 2020: CBC Trip to Colombia

Please check our web calendar for up-to-date field trip information, including schedule changes, at [cayugabirdclub.org](http://cayugabirdclub.org).

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## November Field Trips

*Cayuga Bird Club field trips are open to all.*



### Owling with Bob McGuire and Suan Yong

*Friday, Nov 1, 6pm-10pm*

Join Suan and Bob in exploring the area's woodlands to look and listen for various owl species. Meet at the Cornell Lab parking lot at 6pm, dress warmly (as there will be much standing still in the cold), and bring a

bird banding on campus and at the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory. She then attended SUNY Brockport, where she monitored Great Lakes coastal wetland birds and amphibians and studied migration physiology of White-throated Sparrows for her M.S. degree. She spent four years as a Wildlife Technician at NYSDEC, where she monitored rare bird species and their habitat, and now works as a DEC Habitat Biologist here in the Finger Lakes/Western New York region.

*Cayuga Bird Club meetings start at 7:30pm on the second Monday of every month September through June, and are open to the public. Building doors open at 7:00pm and are locked at 7:45pm.*

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## From the President

*Diane Morton*



As birders, we can make valuable contributions to bird studies through a variety of citizen science projects. The use of eBird, for example, has become very popular, with more than half a billion

sightings reported worldwide. Abundance animations on the eBird Science pages, made possible by detailed eBird observations for migratory birds in the Americas, are fascinating. I never tire of watching animated maps, for example, of a [Wood Thrush](#) wave come up from Central America to our part of the continent and then back south again, gone from our region for another cycle. Find your own [favorite species to watch](#) on these maps!

In addition to helping to document seasonal dynamics, citizen science efforts by birders have been essential for understanding changes in abundance over longer periods of time. Data from Breeding Bird Surveys and Christmas Bird Counts across North America were used in analyses of abundance of hundreds of North

headlamp or flashlight. If conditions are right, we will visit John Confer's HHOWLS saw-whet banding site to learn about the banding process, and if we're lucky, see an owl being banded. For questions, contact Suan at [suan.yong@gmail.com](mailto:suan.yong@gmail.com) or Bob at [bmcguire@clarityconnect.com](mailto:bmcguire@clarityconnect.com).



### **Loon Watch with Suan Yong**

*Sunday, Nov 10, 6:30am-8:40am*

Suan will be at Taughannock Point counting migrating loons from 6:30-8:40am. Join him for all or part of this period to observe this secret wonder where potentially hundreds, even thousands, of loons fly south for the winter. There is also the possibility of seeing waterfowl such as scoters and Long-tailed Ducks.

The watch happens at the northernmost point east of the creek; if driving from Ithaca, take the first right before the stone bridge, pass the (closed) ticket booth and keep left to the parking lot. Dress very warmly as standing by the lake with a north breeze can be very cold.



### **Where the Birds Are, with Paul Anderson**

*Saturday, Nov 16, 8am-12pm*

Paul will lead a half-day trip to "where the birds are". This may include late fall migrants and returning ducks. Meet at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology parking lot at 8:00 am. Bring something to drink and snacks. We should be back by noon. Dress warmly according to the weather.

American bird species, showing that bird populations have declined overall by nearly 30% since 1970, and that certain species, such as grassland birds, have suffered especially severe losses. On November 4, the lead author of that study, Dr. Ken Rosenberg, will give a seminar at the Cornell Lab: "3 Billion Birds Lost: The Bird Crisis and What We Can Do About It". We can all learn more about steps to help prevent further catastrophic losses of birds.

Birders can also participate in regional surveys to count specific bird species. Our Cayuga Bird Club speaker in November, DEC Biologist Christina Hoh, will be telling us about winter raptor surveys to monitor Short-eared Owls and Northern Harriers in our region. You can help with these surveys; find out more at Christina's talk on November 12.

If you'd like to contribute bird sightings from your own home, consider participating in Project FeederWatch, a project of the Cornell Lab that relies on observations reported by people about birds coming to their feeders from November through early April. Sign up by November 9 at [feederwatch.org](http://feederwatch.org).

And don't forget our annual Christmas Bird Count on January 1, 2020! This annual count, organized by the National Audubon Society, is one of the longest running citizen science efforts to document bird population numbers. We'll have details in the next newsletter about our Ithaca area Christmas Bird Count, but mark the date - January 1 - on your calendar.

January 1, 2020 is also the kick-off date for New York's third Breeding Bird Atlas (NYS BBA III), which will continue for five years across the state. Everyone can contribute to the atlas by documenting behaviors of breeding birds within atlas blocks, using the eBird portal of NYS BBA III. To prepare for atlasing, Phil McNeil and I will offer an eBird workshop on Sunday morning, November 24, at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. We will help people learn to use the eBird mobile app and will also discuss breeding codes for atlas submissions. More information about NYS BBA III is available here:



**Franklin Mountain,  
with Gary Kohlenberg**

*Saturday, Nov 23, 7:30am-5:00pm*

Gary Kohlenberg will lead a trip to Franklin Mountain near Oneonta, NY to look for Golden Eagles. It is about a two hour drive. Meet in the East Hill Plaza parking lot on Pine Tree Road, across from Collegetown Bagels at 7:30 am, to car pool. Bring lunch and a scope if you have one. Dress for possible cold and wind. We will be standing most of the time, although there is a picnic table. Bring a folding chair if you'd like. We will return to Ithaca by 5pm.



**Conowingo Dam, Maryland,  
with Carl Steckler**

*Saturday, Nov. 30, 9:00am*

*to Sunday, Dec. 1, 6:00pm*

Carl Steckler will lead a Cayuga Bird Club field trip to Conowingo Dam on Nov 30th, returning Dec 1. The Conowingo Dam, on the lower Susquehanna River in northern Maryland, is well known among bird-watchers and photographers as the best place east of the Mississippi River to see Bald Eagles. The eagles begin congregating at the dam in late October as their summer fishing

[ebird.org/atlasny/about/how-to-atlas](http://ebird.org/atlasny/about/how-to-atlas).

There are so many opportunities to make valuable contributions through citizen science projects - all while we are out enjoying watching birds!

Good Birding,

*Diane*

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## **Conservation Action Committee October Highlights**

*Jody Enck*

Our committee has been busy as usual this month. We had a second, fall, work-day at Lighthouse Point with students from the New Roots Charter School in early October. Then on October 30th, we finally finished planting the 70 potted plants of 9 species we purchased in September. We also got many (but not all) of these fenced from deer and rabbits. To accomplish this planting task we also cleared more plots of invasive species like Privet, European Buckthorn, Tartarian Honeysuckle, and Multiflora Rose. Altogether, we cleared and replanted more than a dozen 10m X 10m plots.

Part of the fun of clearing the plots is finding hidden, native-plant gems among dense cover of non-native plants. We have found, and day-lighted, several species important for birds, including Red Oak, Red Cedar, Dogwood species, Mulberry species, and Staghorn Sumac. These should respond with faster growth next spring now that they will be exposed to more sun.



territories freeze over and their numbers increase steadily through January, when they then begin to return north to nest. Every winter well over 100 Bald Eagles gather to feast on fish that are sucked through the giant turbines as this dam generates electricity for the Baltimore area.



We will meet at the Lab of O parking lot at 9:00 AM on Saturday, November 30th, and arrive late in the afternoon the same day. It is a five hour drive not including stops. (Possible alternate date Nov 29 & 30). After a short visit to the dam we will check in at our motel/hotel (to be determined). The next morning, we will get up early to get to the dam just after sunrise to claim our spot - it does fill up fast! Depending on the weather we will leave around noon for the drive back home, a good time having been had by all.

Please contact Carl Steckler at [cjs9@cornell.edu](mailto:cjs9@cornell.edu) if you are interested in going on this trip. Let him know if you have a hotel preference and if you can provide car-pooling.



### **Beginner Bird Walks at Sapsucker Woods**

*Saturdays and Sundays,  
8:30am-10:30am*

There is a free beginner bird walk at the Lab of Ornithology every weekend morning, led by Cayuga Bird Club volunteer docents. Meet at 8:30am by the Visitor Center entrance. Note that



*Evidence of our hard work clearing non-native plants and planting native species in Lighthouse Point Woods.*

*Photo credit: Jody Enck.*

Although our planting effort is done for the fall, there are many activities in which you can get involved. We still are working on fencing some of the plants we got in the ground. We have more mapping to do as part of our effort to monitor the success of our habitat improvements. We always welcome people to go birding and record your observations in eBird (using the Lighthouse Point site) to help us monitor bird response to our efforts. And, we need folks to help us plan our activities at Lighthouse Point for next spring.

Another thing you can help with is planning for a bird-garden tour next spring. We are looking for folks who have taken to heart the idea of providing native-species-dominated habitat for birds, no matter what size of area you have around your home. Some people have large “yards” in which they can provide bird habitat. Others have very small spaces. Some people may live in apartments with little or no outdoor space of their own except maybe a balcony. All of these spaces can be made more favorable for birds, pollinators, and other insects that provide food for birds. Please let me know if you are interested in helping to plan this garden tour. What we hope will set this effort apart from others you may have experienced is that we also will offer a “home visit” to provide expert advice about what you can do to take some of the great ideas you see on the tour and turn them into a reality around your own home.

the Visitor Center does not open until 10am, and there are no restroom facilities. The walks last approximately 2 hours, and are timed to allow participants to take the 11am Behind-the-Scenes tour offered on most weekend days.

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## **Cayuga Lake Basin First-of-Year Birds Reported**

*October, 2019*

10/18 Brant

**2019 species count so far: 275\***

\*includes Long-Eared Owl observed on May 11, but not previously tabulated.

*Thanks to Dave Nutter for compiling these records. The full lists are on the [CBC website](#).*

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## **Let's Look for Loons! Taughannock Loon Watch 2019**

*Suan Yong*



The morning of Sunday, November 10, will probably be cold, with temps near or below freezing. With any luck, there will be a north breeze at Taughannock Point adding some eye-watering wind chill. Shall we meet before the 6:51am sunrise to count loons?

"Sounds cool, I'll try to make it," might have been my response if asked, and one part of me honestly wishes I were the kind of morning person that would do it. But the realistic part of me would struggle to find a compelling reason to get out of bed that early. I mean, I've seen plenty of loons on Cayuga Lake; not a lot at once, and not all the time, but if

*If there's blank space below, it's been clipped by gmail. [Click here to view the full newsletter on the web.](#)*

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## **Native Plants at Salt Point: Restoring a Diverse Ecology**

*Donna Scott & Susan Ruoff*

*Directors, Friends of Salt Point Ltd.*

*Photographs: Courtesy of Susan Ruoff*

The management of Salt Point Natural Area is overseen by The Friends of Salt Point Limited. Our mission is to restore and preserve the natural and open features of the Salt Point, a floodplain adjacent to Cayuga Lake in Lansing, NY. Owned by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), and leased and managed by the Town of Lansing, Salt Point is a 34-acre former industrial site that produced table salt from salt brine pumped up from deep in the ground to the salt works factory (from 1891 until plant was demolished in the 1960s)..

The natural area is located across Salmon Creek from Myers Park. Our ultimate goal is to restore Salt Point to a natural state and provide habitat for a greater diversity of native birds and other wildlife by removing the extensive invasive species and replanting with native New York plants. To inform the public about this mission and to get some volunteers to help with the work, the Friends of Salt Point sponsor public programs to educate the public about the history and wildlife at Salt Point. Volunteers and in-kind donations are also provided by NYS Electric and Gas Company [NYSEG] and Cargill Salt Company.

In partnership with other organizations (Cayuga Bird Club, NYS DEC, NYSEG, Town of Lansing, and local experts such as native plant specialist Dan Segal at the Plantsmen), we obtained a generous grant (\$4350) from the Community Foundation of Tompkins County to conduct a pilot project to remove invasive plants and install native species.

The pilot project focused on six critical 25 by 25 foot test plots identified by local experts as highly disturbed. Invasive herbaceous and shrub species, such as Japanese Knotweed, Garlic Mustard, Japanese Stilt Grass, Purple Loosestrife, non-native Honeysuckle, Pale Swallow Wort and Autumn Olive, which currently jeopardize biodiversity and prevent the



you're a regular "round-the-laker", they're just one of the many treats you expect to see from time to time.

So why did I decide to lead the loon watch this year, and why am I trying to convince you to join me? Because I recently heard about how it started...

*(...insert harp music here...)*

The year is 1992. Bill Evans had a hunch that rarities like jaegers could probably be found on Cayuga Lake by watching the fall morning flight at Taughannock Point. He began doing so regularly, and while he didn't find many rarities, he did notice large numbers of loons and other waterfowl flying past on north wind mornings. A few other birders joined him that year and they tallied nearly 5000 Common Loons.

To better understand how many loons were passing through, he, along with other local birdwatchers, conducted the first organized Loon Watch on Cayuga Lake in 1993, tallying an astounding 10,000+ loons in southbound migration. Steve Kelling coordinated the watch in 1994 and, thereafter through 2004, Bob Meade counted every morning from mid-October to early December with the help of many birders. Seasonal totals have ranged from a high of 13,250 loons in 1995 to a low of 2,990 birds in 2002.

Since Bob Meade's "retirement", the loon watch has only been conducted periodically. The last full season count was conducted in 2012 by Ethan Kistler with help from Bill Evans and totaled 6032 southbound loons.

The Cayuga Bird Club has hosted an outing to the Taughannock Loon Watch once each fall, and will continue the tradition this year on Sunday, November 10. Of course, a scheduled single-day watch is a hit-or-miss proposition, depending on wind, weather, etc. But there's only one way to know for sure. And perhaps someone will feel inspired enough to restart the Loon Watch on a more frequent basis.

succession of native species were removed.



*Location of Test Plots*

The six test plots were replanted with a selection of native species intrinsic to floodplain ecosystems in order to provide a more diverse and rich wildlife habitat. Roughly 30 native species new to the site were planted and these are expected to self-propagate in the coming years. Based on ten years of planting experience at Salt Point, it is known that soil amendments are crucial to successful plant growth at this site. Plots were fertilized and provided with polymeric, moisture-retaining root gels. They then were mulched first with large pieces of heavy cardboard, then chipped wood mulch on top of the cardboard (both free from Lansing sources).



*A Test Plot*

Each test plot is surrounded with "visually discreet" eight-foot tall, wire mesh fencing designed to prevent wildlife browsing and other threats. To water the new plantings, the Town has provided a water tank on a trailer that can be filled and later pumped out with a gasoline engine. Maintenance work including weeding and re-mulching will accompany plant growth monitoring for approximately five years. In addition, the meadow was re-seeded with grasses and wildflowers after the dried spoils

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**Get ready for  
Breeding Bird Atlas III  
with eBird!**

*Diane Morton and Phil McNeil will offer a free eBird Workshop on Sunday, November 24, just for Cayuga Bird Club members.*

New York State's Breeding Bird Atlas III will begin on January 1, 2020 and eBird will be the portal for data submission. Practice using eBird now, so you can help with NYS BBAIII! We'll answer your questions about making the most of eBird, with tips that make it easy to enter your bird sightings. We'll also discuss using breeding codes for atlas submissions. Beginners are welcome. Please download the free eBird mobile app to your smartphone or tablet prior to the workshop, and set up a user name and password. (We'll help if you run into a snag). We will also cover using the eBird website by computer if you don't use the mobile app.

We will begin at 10:30 am in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Visitor Center auditorium. Questions? Contact Diane Morton at [cayugabirdclub.president@gmail.com](mailto:cayugabirdclub.president@gmail.com).

## Cleaning and Sanitizing Bird Feeders

*Donna Scott*



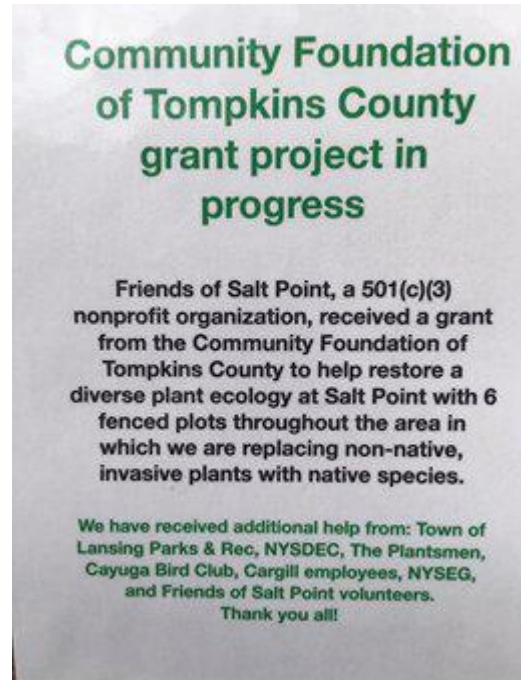
Before my retirement from the Department of Food Science/Cornell Cooperative Extension at Cornell University, I was a food safety specialist and educator for the Cooperative Extension system in most New York State counties.

When cleaning any food preparation or food service equipment and tableware we and the NYS Health Department always recommended these three steps below; these steps could and should apply to cleaning and sanitizing bird feeders, too.

1. **Wash away** food or bird seed matter, dirt and grime using warm potable water if possible (~120°F) and detergent (in recommended amounts – don't use too much soap!) and by scrubbing well with an appropriate brush or scrubby pad. Change the soapy water when it becomes dirty

from dredging Salmon Creek were removed last spring.

This endeavor is a prelude to a larger restoration effort ultimately aimed at removal of all invasive species and restoration of native, natural biodiversity to Salt Point. The public will be kept informed of our progress through newspaper and newsletter articles, as well as radio announcements. A special "Restoration" webpage with photographs will be added to the Salt Point website to update our supporters and volunteers. Signage at the Salt Point Kiosk and on the fences will explain the project to visitors.



*Sign At Each Test Plot*

Cayuga Bird Club president Diane Morton, wrote a letter of support for the Salt Point habitat improvement grant proposal, as this area is so important for both migratory and resident birds. Over time, by providing more native plants at Salt Point, both diversity and nesting success of birds will increase there. Cayuga Bird Club members are encouraged to help out at workdays for this project! If you would like to volunteer, contact Donna Scott at [dls9@cornell.edu](mailto:dls9@cornell.edu).

Plants for Habitat Restoration at Salt Point:

Planting Zones	Plants
Sunny/Wet Plot E	<b>Herbaceous:</b>
	Helenium
	Iris versicolor
	Cinnamon fern
	Aruncus
	Spotted Joe Pye
	<b>Shrubs:</b>



looking if you are cleaning a lot of feeders.

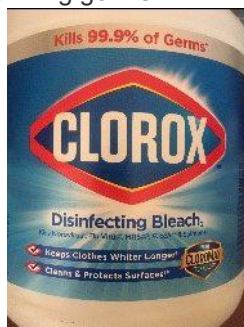
2. **Rinse well with clean potable water** (if possible ~120°F) **to get rid of the DEBRIS and the SOAP.** The feeder cleaning methods I have seen in bird feeder advice articles don't seem to mention this rinsing part.

If present, debris and soap both make the third step with bleach **INEFFECTIVE** because the bleach molecules get tied up with the debris and soap and then won't kill microorganisms. Rinsing is important!

3. **Sanitize** the feeders: Soak for 2-3 minutes in a dilute bleach solution in tepid water - not hot water; see bleach bottle for strength guideline. (For a typical 5.25% Chlorine bleach use 1-1/2 to 3 teaspoons per gallon of water; [3 teaspoons = 1 tablespoon]). Allow to air dry. Do not rinse with water after this step. Do not wipe dry.

Air drying with the dilute bleach solution helps maintain the killing properties of the bleach on the surface of the feeder. However, the chlorine does volatilize away and won't affect the new seed put into the feeder after it dries.

Buy "Disinfecting bleach." Grocery shelves have many types for laundry, so you have to look for this one that is better at killing germs.



If items are really badly contaminated – with feeders this would mean they are filthy with bird droppings and/or black, old moldy seed debris, or there are known sick birds using them – one might want to go to a higher concentration of bleach solution to **DISINFECT** the feeders. Here use the guideline on bottle for "disinfection", which is a more heavy-duty treatment (higher concentration of bleach) than for "sanitizing".

This all sounds complicated, but it is not. Just set up a backyard "3-bucket

	Elderberry
	Chokeberry-Aronia (black and red)
	wineberries
	<b>Trees:</b>
	Larch
Shady/Wet Plot A	<b>Herbaceous:</b>
	Christmas fern
	Skunk cabbage
	Jack in the pulpit
	Blue Cohosh
	Solomon's seal
	<b>Shrubs:</b>
	Sweet shrub
	Spice bush
	<b>Trees:</b>
Sassafras	
Sunny/Dry Plots C & F	<b>Herbaceous:</b>
	Thalictrum
	Wild Bergamot
	May apple
	Sensitive fern
	Ostrich fern
	<b>Shrubs:</b>
	Blackberries
	Redbud
	Raspberry
	<b>Trees:</b>
	Hornbeam
	Corylus
Basswood	
Shady/Dry Plots B & D	<b>Herbaceous:</b>
	Wild bergamot
	Trillium
	Geranium
	Actea (Baneberry)
	Allium canadense
	Trout lily
	Virginia bluebell
	<b>Shrubs:</b>
	Spicebush
	Viburnum
	Witch hazel
	<b>Trees:</b>
White Oak	
Hickory	
Sunny (Meadow Planting)	<b>Grasses:</b>
	Elliot's Broom sedge ( <i>Andropogon gyrons</i> )

or tote system" to do the work - like the food service 3-bay sinks.



If cleaning just a few feeders, you can use one sink, tote or bucket:

- Complete cleaning with soap and water in step 1.
- Empty the sink and rinse it well.
- Then fill up sink with clean rinse water for step 2 (or just rinse under running potable water from tap).
- Empty and rinse the sink, then
- Set up the sink for the 3rd step with the bleach and water solution for soaking feeders for a few minutes.
- Air dry.

How often to clean feeders depends on how quickly they get dirty. Use your best judgement, clean on a regular schedule, and don't forget your hummingbird feeders! I clean mine this way every other time I fill them with sugar water because the sugar causes them to get moldy (black deposits or cloudy solution) fairly quickly.

However, I sanitize them with straight white vinegar rather than bleach, because vinegar is edible and I don't air dry the bottle before refilling it. I just make sure all the vinegar has drained out.

## Field Trip Report West Side of the Lake

Ken Haas  
October 6, 2019

Eleven people joined me on October 6th to do a little birding on the West side of the lake. The weather was cool, overcast and winds from the South at 10 to 15 mph. Our first destination happened to be at the location where we all met – the Black Diamond Trail where it meets the Ithaca Children's Garden off of route

Beard grass ( <i>Andropogon virginicus</i> )
Indian wood oats ( <i>Chasmanthium</i> )
Canada wild rye ( <i>Elymus canadensis</i> )
Purple love grass ( <i>Eragrostis spectabilis</i> )
<b>Herbaceous:</b>
Helianthus
Heliopsis
Helianthoides
Columbine (native)
Aster

## Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) on Cayuga Lake



A Presentation by  
**Nathaniel Launer**  
Community Science Institute  
Cayuga Lake HABs Monitoring Program  
Coordinator

*Thursday, November 21, 2019,  
7 p.m.  
Lansing Town Hall,  
29 Auburn Road, Lansing  
Free and Open to the Public*

Launer will share observations and data from two years of HAB monitoring, and suggest ways communities and residents can help address this pressing issue. He coordinates four citizen science water monitoring programs, partnering with hundreds of volunteers across the Finger Lakes region. His background in ecology and conservation biology adds interdisciplinary perspectives to his efforts to protect water at CSI. He is a graduate of the University of Vermont Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources.

89 in Ithaca. The winds were calm there, but not much activity. We only picked up 14 species, all of which were the usual birds one would expect to see there.

Hoping for better luck we car pooled and went just up the road to Allen H. Treman State Marine Park. Here the winds were much more noticeable, increasing the degree of difficulty of locating birds. Walking only a few yards off of the parking lot, we noticed House, Song and Field Sparrows in the low shrubs at the corner of the marina. Looking to the left someone called out "Meadowlark"! Sure enough, one was on the lawn in the dog run area. Walking further along the trail enabled us to see a few birds in the trees but no good looks.



Then, in one small area of a few trees grouped together, we found a lot of activity. Notable species we saw there were Yellow-rumped, Palm and Chestnut-sided Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Chickadees, Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Wood-pewee, Red-eyed Vireo and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak. All in this one, little spot! There were good birds in the air as well. A few Bald Eagles, a fly-by Kingfisher and a fly-by Merlin and Sharp-shinned Hawk. At the completion of our loop, in the same shrubs where we saw the sparrows, some of us had fleeting looks at Nashville and Wilson's Warblers. We spent almost 3 hours there and picked up 37 species.

From there, four of us continued up to our last stop which was the Black Diamond trail's other end – near the South Rim Trail of Taughannock Falls State Park. We spent only a little more than a half hour, but found 12 species, including a pair of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and a constant stream of mostly Ring-billed Gulls overhead. The highlight of this part of our field trip was the view from the foot bridge over the Taughannock Creek. Thanks to all who attended, and a special

Sponsored by the Friends of Salt Point, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the restoration and care of the Salt Point Natural Area, Lansing, NY

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## Field Trip Report

### Sparrow Walks

Mark Chao

photos by Raaj Bora

On October 12 and 13, I led morning field trips for the Cayuga Bird Club at the Cornell community garden plots on Freese Road. We had an impressive turnout of at least 33 people, about evenly distributed between the two days.

Right as people were arriving on Saturday, we got distant but satisfying scope views of a MERLIN perched on a roadside utility wire, pulling red strands of flesh from an unidentified songbird. We then proceeded into the garden plots to look for sparrows. They were more difficult to find than usual, I'd say, but eventually we collectively turned up seven species -- SONG, SWAMP, SAVANNAH, CHIPPING, FIELD, WHITE-CROWNED (both juvenile and adult), and WHITE-THROATED SPARROWS. All morning long, we heard and saw a flock of RED-WINGED BLACKBIRDS feeding on sunflower heads and reposing in the trees, including many males bearing rusty-edged fall feathers with obscured epaulets. We also saw many birds flying over, including seven EASTERN BLUEBIRDS, three somewhat late TREE SWALLOWS, two PILEATED WOODPECKERS, and probably two near-adult BALD EAGLES (one sighting to our south, one later coming in from the north).

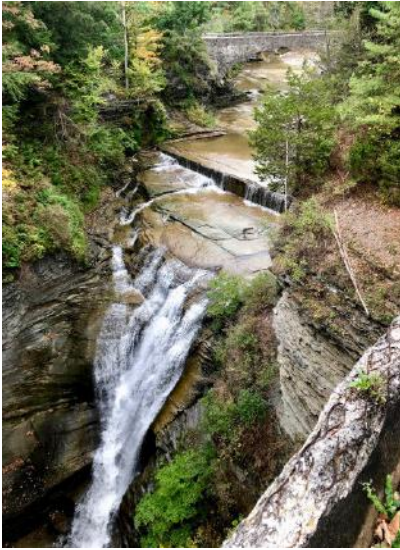


*White-Crowned Sparrow*

Toward the end of Saturday's outing, we decided to cross over to the Liddell Lab pond area. Here we had a couple of fine capstones to the morning – a BLUE-HEADED VIREO foraging in the trees



thanks to Diane Morton for eBirding the trip for us.



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## Field Trip Report

### All-Day Trip Up the Lake

Bob McGuire,  
October 27, 2019

Though I had hoped for a better turnout, I really hadn't expected it. When Ken Kemphues and I began at Stewart Park, the rain was gusting down, and you couldn't even tell that the sun had just risen. As it turned out, we had a great day, with lots of loons, ducks, and Sandhill Cranes.

A quick check of the south end of the lake from East Shore Park yielded little more than cormorants, and the spit at Myers was bare (no shorebird drop-ins). But things quickly picked up when we got to Aurora. Hundreds of Common Loons and a single Red-throated Loon were in constant motion, flying back and forth and diving. There were several feeding flocks of gulls, cormorants, and loons over what must have been schools of fish.

At the Refuge, between the visitor's center and the end of the wildlife drive, we encountered huge groups of ducks, many close in for good binocular viewing and many more as distant scope views. It was an interesting mix of non-breeding, breeding, and juvenile plumages, giving us quite a workout. Ring-necked Ducks, Canvasbacks, American Wigeon, Gadwall, Northern

near the lab, and a presumed female COOPER'S HAWK heading south.

As we gathered on Sunday, it was still below 40 degrees with a pall of fog over the plots. Then just as we started out, the sun rose brilliantly over the trees, the mist dissipated, and many birds woke up and got busy.

We started over at the Liddell Lab side this time. Right on the edge of the roadside copse, we saw perhaps the most intriguing bird of the weekend -- a sparrow that appeared to have fine frontal streaks, buffy breastband, and finely patterned mantle like a Lincoln's Sparrow, but a stout grayish bill with a rounded culmen and overall large size and long proportions of a Song Sparrow. Even with extended views, good photographs by Raaj Bora, and some helpful input from others, I'm still not sure what that bird was. *What do you think? (answer below)*



*Mystery Sparrow*

We advanced to the weedy pond edge, where we had some excellent sunlit views of two WHITE-CROWNED SPARROWS and many SONG SPARROWS, plus a male BELTED KINGFISHER that flew in with a rattle from the east and perched on a branch hanging over the pond.

Then we crossed back to the community plots. We found about the same mix of sparrows as on Saturday, this time with much greater ease and opportunity for leisurely comparison of field marks and sounds. Our airborne highlights were a bit different but arguably equally stirring -- at least 80 TURKEY VULTURES rising at once on

Pintail, and both Scaup were all back in large numbers. There were still many Green-winged and a few Blue-winged Teal. Oddly, there was a single Long-tailed Duck in, of all places, the visitor's center pool.

We were honored with a brief dance from a pair of Sandhill Cranes in Eaton Marsh, and were lucky to re-find the American Bittern right at the end of Benning's. Knox-Marcellus Marsh held nearly a dozen Trumpeter Swans, numerous ducks, and our only shorebirds (two Greater Yellowlegs). More than twenty Sandhill Cranes continued feeding on the flats.

After lunch at Rose's in Savannah, we checked Carncross Road where there was great shorebird habitat but no shorebirds. The best bird was a fly-over American Pipit.

We headed back down the west side of the lake and were surprised to find the water nearly empty of birds. A group of 59 Ruddy Ducks prompted a "confirm" from eBird. Another unexpected encounter was four Snow Geese feeding on the lawn at Cayuga Lake State Park.

The day turned out unexpectedly warm, with a few moments of sun, and some wonderful sightings and ID challenges. I really enjoy birding on "bad weather" days!

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## Cayuga Bird Club Motus Tower Is Up!



*Bryant adjusting the tower antennae*

the warming air to our south, and the weekend's only RED-TAILED HAWK, chased by two crows to the lone tree across the road.

Leading up to both field trips, I pondered whether to take people over to the Bluegrass Lane area, where a cattail patch in the middle of the switchgrass field has perennially hosted sojourning Nelson's Sparrows in early October, including this year. In past years, I have indeed added a Nelson's quest to these sparrow walks. But alas, those repeated efforts have led to just one fleeting sighting for one person.

I decided this year to be very direct about the low prospects for success (and possible higher success for solo searchers or smaller groups). On Saturday, maybe deterred also by the light rain, we collectively decided not to try. But on Sunday, we had a quorum and headed over. This time, a few participants (not I) had a brief but definitive NELSON'S SPARROW sighting -- and Raaj even got good photos!



*Nelson's Sparrow*

Especially at sites like the garden plots and Bluegrass Lane field, with their narrow corridors and tall plants, birding in big groups can be a bit of a challenge. But not for the Cayuga Bird Club! All weekend long, people helped each other get onto birds, while also remaining cheerful and optimistic even when missing birds that others saw. I'm especially grateful to Diane Morton and Ken Kemphues, Bob McGuire, Dave Nutter, Jody Enck, Ann Mitchell, Ken Haas, and probably some others that I am forgetting at the moment -- the veteran trip leaders who shared information, lugged scopes, kept better lists than I did, and generally helped make the trips more orderly, enlightening and fun for me and everyone.

Thanks to all for a great weekend!

**Mystery Sparrow Identity:**



Our Cayuga Bird Club Motus tracking station went up at Myers Park on October 19, 2019. We were lucky to have clear blue skies and warm temperatures for this event. Club members helped to put the antennae together, while migration researcher Bryant Dossman secured the mast to a corner of pavilion E in the park and attached the antennae at the top. We watched as Bryant then connected the receiver elements. Voila! Flashing lights showed us that the system was working! Check out the tower the next time you are at Myers Point.

Our station will be part of the [motus.org](http://motus.org) network administered by Bird Studies Canada for migration studies using radio telemetry. If a radio-tagged bird flies within a few miles of our tower, that bird's identity and time of detection will be recorded and shared with migration researchers throughout the network.

Many thanks to Bryant Dossman for putting together the tower for us, and to Pat Tyrell and staff of Lansing Parks and Recreation for support and preparation of the site with an electrical line for us.



Jody Enck working on an antenna.

According to Kevin McGowan, the mystery sparrow pictured earlier is a juvenile Song Sparrow. "Bill shape is wrong for Lincoln's or Swamp. Malar marks are too large and prominent. Streaking is messy and juvenile-like."

## Field Trip Report

### Dryden Lake Area

Phil McNeil

October 20, 2019

A small group, seven, of us explored the area around Dryden Lake looking for latish migrants and visitors to the lake. We started with a stop at the Purvis Road Natural Area, an unusual floating mat sphagnum-heath peat bog. A short interesting walk from the road, with few birds, but a unique mix of plants, and a new birding location for the group. Next, was around the corner to the old railroad bed leading from Lake Road to the Cornell Dairy Farm. Lots of sparrows, Chipping, White-throated, Song and Dark-eyed Juncos, as well as some of the expected fall birds.

At Dryden Lake, we had few birds on the water, Mallards, Pied-billed Grebes, a few Ring-billed Gulls and ten Common Mergansers with a single Ruddy Duck following. The trail along the lake was pretty quiet, but we did have a great low flyover by an immature Cooper's Hawk. Our last stop was north of Chaffee Road on the Jim Schug Trail, and more sparrows: Field and Swamp. Another accipiter, likely a Sharp-shinned, buzzed the group and we scanned a group of soaring Turkey Vultures, but couldn't make any of them into Black Vultures.

In all, a fine walk, with a great group, tallying 36 species for the morning.

## 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 pm 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*





Bryant putting together receiver components.

Photos by Diane Morton and Jody Enck.

**Minutes**  
of the October 14, 2019  
Cayuga Bird Club meeting  
are available on the Cayuga  
Bird Club [website](#).

September. Payment may be made via Paypal at [cayugabirdclub.org/membership](http://cayugabirdclub.org/membership) 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.

Send newsletter submissions to [cbceditor1@gmail.com](mailto:cbceditor1@gmail.com) by the 25th to be included in the next issue. Please contribute sightings, news, announcements, book reviews, original poetry, art, photos, and anything else that might be of interest to the local birding community.

Cayuga Bird Club Officer contact Information is available at [www.cayugabirdclub.org/about-us](http://www.cayugabirdclub.org/about-us).

Chickadee illustration in masthead  
by Karen Allaben-Confer.

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