



# Cayuga Bird Club

## June 2020

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### Cayuga Bird Club Get-Together on Zoom

June 8, 2020  
7pm-8pm

On Monday, June 8, 7-8 pm, Diane Morton will host a Zoom social get-together for Cayuga Bird Club members. We'll be able to see old friends, meet new members, and talk about the birds we've been seeing. It has been three months since our last CBC meeting -- it would be great to see your faces again! Because of continuing social distancing guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid-19, our annual Cayuga Bird Club picnic has been cancelled; we hope you'll be able to attend this virtual social event instead.

Diane will send a Zoom invitation to Cayuga Bird Club members on Friday (June 5) before the June 8 Zoom meeting. Please join us!

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### From the President

Diane Morton



This spring Cayuga Bird Club held its first lecture course about birds, *Spring Ornithology with Steve Kress*, a new project for the club. It has been my pleasure to work with Steve and our Cayuga Bird Club support team of Laura Stenzler, Sandy Podulka, and Phil McNeil to present the course this spring for 75 class participants.

When Steve asked me last summer if the club might consider administering a course on birds that he would teach, I thought it would be a great project — in line with our mission of educating people about birds. Steve taught about birds for more than 40 years through the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, but this year he developed all new slide presentations with updated material. With the help of Phil and Laura, Steve selected stunning new images of birds from those donated by local photographers or purchased through Shutterstock. With sounds provided by Bob McGuire and Lang Elliott, students were also able to hear exceptional recordings of birdsong as Steve gave identification tips for each species. In addition to telling us about the life histories of both resident and migratory birds of our area, Steve provided a wealth of information on bird behavior, migration and conservation.

Because of Covid-19, we needed to quickly transition our planned in-person lecture series to an online Zoom webinar course. The online option was much appreciated by participants who could now watch from home, and provided a welcome weekly distraction and focus during these unsettling times. Steve also encouraged everyone

## Calendar

June 2 (Tue), 7:30pm: FLLT Spring Bird Quest Recap on Zoom, with Mark Chao. For more information and registration: [fltt.org/events](http://fltt.org/events)

June 8 (Mon): Cayuga Bird Club Annual Picnic  
**CANCELLED**

June 8 (Mon) 7pm: Cayuga Bird Club Zoom gathering.

Sep 1 (Tue): First newsletter of our Fall Season, with information about events and Coronavirus status.

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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## Cayuga Lake Basin First-of-Year Birds Reported May, 2020

5/01 Great Crested Flycatcher  
5/01 Eastern Kingbird  
5/01 Blue-winged Warbler  
5/01 Common Yellowthroat  
5/01 Northern Parula  
5/02 Veery  
5/02 Red-eyed Vireo  
5/02 Prothonotary Warbler  
5/02 Chestnut-sided Warbler  
5/02 Prairie Warbler  
5/03 Eastern Whip-poor-will  
5/03 Lincoln's Sparrow  
5/03 Golden-winged Warbler  
5/03 Hooded Warbler  
5/03 Cerulean Warbler  
5/03 Magnolia Warbler  
5/04 Tennessee Warbler  
5/04 Blue Grosbeak  
5/05 Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
5/05 Semipalmated Plover

to go out birdwatching as “homework”, another welcome diversion.

The eight-week course finished on May 19. Both new birders and those who have taken a course from Steve before have given us positive feedback on this year's course, rating the quality of the lectures as “Excellent”, that they would recommend to others. If there was one thing that people would have changed though, it would have been to have the course in person. People missed the opportunity to connect with one another and to hear the lectures in person. We do hope to offer an in-person Spring Ornithology course in the future.

In addition to the people mentioned above who have been vital to the Spring Ornithology course's success, we also wish to thank the following contributors: Donna Scott for help with initial course planning; images or illustrations provided by Sandy Flint, Melissa Groo, Jean Hall, Jay McGowan, Phil McNeil, Jim Neiger, Uliu Porumbar, Marie Read, Ton Schat, Marjolein Schat, Siyu Wang, David Wolfson, Suan Yong, and Fran Fairborn; night flight sound recordings provided by Bill Evans.

Good birding,

*Diane*

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## Bird Conservation Progress During the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Jody Enck*

We humans may have had to stay close to home this spring, but bird migration occurred just the same as always. Twice a year, migratory birds undertake epic journeys that span continents. As they pass through the Ithaca area, many stop to refuel before continuing on to the boreal forest of Canada. Some stop here to breed in our local woods and fields.

Some of the best migration news is that several Purple Martins have taken up residence in the apartment complex we put up in Stewart Park. Stay tuned for information about whether they can pull off a brood this year.

The lock-down and physical distancing made group activities impossible for the conservation action committee. However, progress was still made on conservation projects. I heard from a few people about the work they were doing right around their homes to improve bird habitat. My hat is off to all of these dirt

5/05 Red-headed Woodpecker  
 5/05 Cape May Warbler  
 5/05 Scarlet Tanager  
 5/06 Blackpoll Warbler  
 5/07 White-eyed Vireo  
 5/08 American Avocet  
 5/08 Canada Warbler  
 5/09 Semipalmated Sandpiper  
 5/09 Grasshopper Sparrow  
 5/09 Orange-crowned Warbler  
 5/11 Black-bellied Plover  
 5/11 Swainson's Thrush  
 5/11 Wilson's Warbler  
 5/12 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher  
 5/12 Willow Flycatcher  
 5/12 Bay-breasted Warbler  
 5/14 Mourning Warbler  
 5/15 Yellow-billed Cuckoo  
 5/15 Ruddy Turnstone  
 5/15 Eastern Wood-Pewee  
 5/15 Alder Flycatcher  
 5/15 Philadelphia Vireo  
 5/16 Black-billed Cuckoo  
 5/16 White-rumped Sandpiper  
 5/16 Least Bittern  
 5/16 Olive-sided Flycatcher  
 5/16 Worm-eating Warbler  
 5/17 Gray-cheeked Thrush  
 5/18 Common Nighthawk  
 5/18 Red-necked Phalarope  
 5/19 Acadian Flycatcher  
 5/20 Glossy Ibis  
 5/23 Laughing Gull

**2020 year count: 254 species**

*Thanks to Dave Nutter for compiling these records. Complete lists can be found on the [CBC website](#).*

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## **Lockdown Birding**

*Suan Yong, editor*

warriors!

We even got some work done at our project sites in Lighthouse Woods and Renwick Woods. Club Vice President, Donna Scott, dropped off 10 Red Oak seedlings on my front porch. I was able to get these planted and fenced down at Lighthouse Point. While there, I also noted the tremendous growth of some of the trees we planted last fall down there. It is so satisfying to see the fruits of our labors!



*Jody Enck planting a Red Oak seedling provided by Donna Scott.*



*Newly planted Red Oak seedling.*





*Corvid #19, not responsible for the current pandemic.*

For this final newsletter for the 2019-2020 season, I asked members of the Cayuga Birding email list to share their perspectives and stories from this most unusual circumstances of the Covid-19 pandemic and the statewide lockdown. Here's what they had to say...



*Little was changed for me except the 6-foot distancing focus. I really appreciated GroupMe notices of rarities to direct activities for the day.*



*I am totally disgusted with the selfishness of birders who ignored the stay at home and put first responders and others in potential peril by travelling all over to chase birds. I'm sure they all have self pitying excuses but stay at home and exercise close to home does not mean travel to MNWR and beyond.*



*Sara Jane and Larry Hymes:*

Being 'forced' to do mostly yard birding only, during the lockdown, we took it a step further and did 'armchair' birding from safety of our living room! Were we ever surprised when a Blackburnian Warbler came to the bird bath right outside of our window where we were 'arm chairing'!! Well,



*Black Cherry and Swamp White Oak planted in fall 2019.*

In addition, Jeanne Grace, the City of Ithaca Forester, and her crew removed a number of big European Buckthorn and Privet plants from that little point of land between the raised boardwalk and Fall Creek in the northwest corner of Renwick Woods. She also provided us with numerous stems of Silky Dogwood, Gray Dogwood, Nannyberry, and Witch Hazel to plant. In mid-May, my two sons and I got these plants in the ground on both sides of the boardwalk.

There still are a lot of smaller stems of non-native, invasive plants to remove there. Nonetheless, we made a nice start on improving the habitat for birds in that corner of the woods.

If you have any questions, or if you want to learn more about how you can help out, please contact Jody Enck at [jodyenck@gmail.com](mailto:jodyenck@gmail.com).



*Aidan Enck Tierney planting a Witch Hazel, and Sawyer Enck Tierney planting Silky Dogwood, in Renwick Woods.*

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**...continued:**  
**Lockdown Birding**

*Therese O'Connor:*

I haven't been out to see warblers for 8 years--since SFO and a couple years following that. The lock down provided

that necessitated moving to a 'lawn' chair in the yard as it turned out that other warblers were also finding food in our cedar trees. A beautiful Bay-breasted, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Redstart, Wilson's, and Common Yellowthroat were soon spotted spending the better part of two days. We saved on gas, contaminating others, and saw these beautiful birds while confined to our yard—and in a chair!



*Kevin C Packard:*

If it weren't for the lockdown, I wouldn't have gone birding at all. Usually I'm way too busy with children's sports and other activities. A Saturday morning in May means driving to a soccer pitch somewhere. This year, all of that is gone. To get out of the house and breathe some fresh air, I've returned to birding. I've been birding since when I was young, but other than watching the feeder in winter, I hadn't gone to places specifically to watch birds in a very long time. This spring I learned about eBird (from one of my kids' teachers - two of whom have shared items in class about bird watching) and joined in on the May 9 count. I've put in now 23 checklists this spring seeing 81 species. In fact, had it not been for the lockdown, I wouldn't have likely joined the cayugabirds-I list either and seen your message. So

more time for me to read the CBC listserve recommendations and actually go out to see warblers. This year I saw Yellow, Chestnut-sided, Cape May, and heard many Common Yellowthroats--saw one. Also 2 Indigo Buntings, a flock of rusty blackbirds, and several Baltimore Orioles were great finds this year. I would have loved to go birding with some warbler experts like Suan Yong, but alas, it couldn't be. Still had a great spring of birds both walking and at my feeders.



*Lisa W:*

I'm out of basin, but... I live near Green Lakes State Park on the edge of a relatively large ravine, and near the tree tops. I have been birding for eight years or so in between everything else in life. I'm just starting to get into bird song and warbler ID. This spring while on lockdown I began hearing migrating warblers in the tree tops behind my house! And on further inspection I could see them! I've always noticed large flocks of black birds in early spring, but it seems this little tributary is a spring migratory route for a variety of birds. I'm going to make a concerted effort to get out there and observe my backyard ravine before taking off to Montezuma or Derby next spring.

It really is a lifelong pursuit. I love reading the Cayuga Basin posts. Thank you!



*Paul Anderson:*

I can't tell if the birds are behaving differently or if I have just noticed them more, but this spring I had several species in my yard (in Cayuga Heights opposite the elementary school) that I have never seen there before: a Scarlet Tanager sang from the trees for about five days; I had a Nashville Warbler; a very musical male Baltimore Oriole is determined to find a mate in the trees around my house; finally today I heard the distinctive call of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo.



*Liisa Mobley:*

While working from home during lockdown, I've been able to spend more time looking at the birds at my feeder; this year was an especially good year for Baltimore Orioles. I had never noticed how feisty orioles are, but we could hear them making a loud chattering noises to warn other orioles off the oranges, and see them getting into fights just outside the window.



hurray for a new interest in bird watching (and bird photography). 😊



*Sara Worden:*

Since I've been working from home and not commuting, I've felt more comfortable dedicating extra car time and carbon footprints to driving to go birding at new locations. Yet another gift of the quarantine!



*Jody Enck:*

I rent an apartment in a house that sits on 11 acres at the confluence of suburbia, agricultural fields, and some woods. Over the first 30 days of May, I birded on this property 40 times, identifying 1,847 individuals of 74 species. I recorded 10 species of warblers on this property in May, and added a new county species for me (fly-over Sandhill Crane). Altogether, in the 7 and a half years I have lived here, I have observed 145 species on/from this property.

I have 3 highlights to share from this lockdown birding. First, for the second year in a row, I had a family of Common Ravens nest on the property. This year, they fledged 4 young, seemingly to the consternation of the local American Crows. Ravens are big, and fairly aggressive towards other birds, so they can afford to be noisy around their nest. I loved hearing them announce that they were returning to the nest with some tasty treat for the young. I also knew immediately when the local Red-tailed Hawks got too close to the nest. I'm sure those Red-tailed Hawks



*(The window is a little messy in this cell phone photo!)  
Oriole fight about to happen.*

We also came across this while walking in Sapsucker Woods. On May 9th!!! I have no idea who built the snowbird, but it's a fun reminder that, in addition to social distancing, we had to endure a cold, wet and snowy spring.



*Tracy McLellan:*

At a time when I feel that my life is threatened by that most ordinary act of going to the grocery store, the only place I feel safe is at home. I have come to realize just how privileged I am to have not only safety, but an

would tell you it is no fun to be chased by an angry Raven.

My second highlight is that for the very first time, I had a pair of Wood Thrushes nest in my woods! They are my absolute favorite birds because their song is so beautiful. In 2016, my kids made a fort for me out of logs and sticks so I could go birding in the middle of my woods while I healed from a broken leg. The Wood Thrushes built their nest within easy viewing of this fort. I enjoyed watching them carry various materials (leaves of American Beech and Sugar Maple, dried grasses, and even needles of Eastern White Pine) to make their nest about 8 feet off the ground in an American Beech.

My third highlight has to do with the antics of the local Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. During the second half of May, two pairs of Sapsuckers were not particularly neighborly as they could not quite decide where one territory ended and the other started. For 2 and a half days, the males engaged in a slow-motion chase around my yard and the adjacent woods. It was like watching the O.J. Simpson slow-speed chase on TV. The birds were flying slow enough that I expected them to drop out of the sky. The one in front would fly through the yard, around trees, and up-and-down over both sides of a fenced garden as if to try to scrape the second bird off its tail. The chaser always was about 10 feet behind the leader. About every 5 minutes or so, they would land on a tree in the woods where they were joined by both females. All 4 birds would noisily chase each other around the tree for a minute. Then, the males

extraordinarily beautiful environment. I watch birds in my garden and on my walks along the roads near my house. I have had some great sightings—a mature Bald Eagle perched on a rock in Salmon Creek, courting Northern Flickers, an Indigo Bunting in the sun a few meters away. I have recorded a few new yard birds, but what I have really enjoyed is getting to know individual birds, notably the seven Baltimore Orioles that come for the jelly I offer them, each with their own variation of plumage and behavior.

Of course, there are things I miss. I have not seen many warblers this spring, I miss Mark Chao's lovely Spring Bird Quest walks, and mostly I miss working on the Jetty Woods restoration project. It seemed we were making great progress getting rid of invasive plants and planting natives, and then we stopped.



*Sandra L. Babcock:*

In this spring of the pandemic, I felt a kinship with regional birders that went beyond anything I have experienced since I arrived in Ithaca six years ago. One memorable morning at Sapsucker Woods, I ran into Ken and Diane, who helpfully pointed out a Parula amidst a flock of warblers. We maneuvered around each other on the trail, carefully keeping to the mandated social distance, but stayed within earshot for several minutes while we watched several spring warblers and vireos flit from tree to tree. Another time I ran into Kate Graham and Kathleen Sheffield (I may have mangled her name) at Howland Island, who helped me locate a cerulean warbler high in the treetops. In any given year, each of these encounters would seem unremarkable. But this year, the kindness of fellow birders, and our mutual excitement at the arrival of long-awaited spring migrants, seemed particularly precious.



## *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 September. Payment may be made via Paypal at [cayugabirdclub.org/membership](https://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*

would go back to their winding, slow-speed chase through my yard and woods. They must have eventually settled the boundary because this chasing finally stopped after 2 and a half days.

As a bonus highlight, I'll mention that for the second spring in a row, I had a Cape May Warbler hanging around for a couple days taking great advantage of the Sapsucker wells drilled in a Weeping Willow tree. I couldn't tell if the warbler was just drinking sap, or was also eating insects attracted to the sap wells. Either way, it was fun to watch!



...more lockdown birding stories in the next column.

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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