

Northern New York Audubon

Serving the Adirondack, Champlain, St. Lawrence Region of New York State

Mission: To conserve and restore natural ecosystems in the Adirondacks, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for the benefit of humanity and the Earth's biological diversity.

Volume 37 Number 3

September-November 2009



Saturday, September 12, 2009 Leonard Pond Trail Colton (St. Lawrence Co.)

Participants will hike 5 miles round-trip on a level dirt-road trail in mixed forest and boreal habitat. Watch for woodland birds, migrants, and boreal species, including the possibility of Red and White-winged Crossbills.

Time: 7:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Location: Meet at the trailhead on Route 56 (exactly 2.5 miles north of the Route 3-Route 56 intersection)

Leader: Joan Collins

Register by calling Joan at (315) 261-4246 or email jecollins@twcnv.rr.com

Saturday, October 17, 2009 Azure Mountain Santa Clara (Franklin Co.)

Azure Mountain's 2512' fire tower summit is reached by hiking a one mile trail with an elevation gain of 944'. In mid-October, late migrant songbirds may be observed along the trail. Once on the open summit, we will watch for migrating raptors.

Time: 9 a.m.

Leader: Joan Collins & Eileen Wheeler

Meet: At the Azure Mt. Trailhead on Blue Mountain Road

Register: by calling Joan at (315) 261-4246 jecollins@twcnv.rr.com

All Photographs in this issue by Carl Heilman II



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Become a Member of NNYA

NNYA leads field trips, publishes books and a newsletter, helps organize birding festivals, awards grants for research projects, arranges lectures by important environmentalists, operates an interactive web site, is a recognized chapter of Audubon New York and National Audubon Society and, well, the list goes on. Visit our website for information about joining: www.nnya.org

NNYA

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Northern New York Audubon, Inc.

A chapter of National Audubon Society
serving the Adirondack, Champlain and
St. Lawrence regions of northern New
York, including Clinton, Essex, Franklin,
Hamilton and St. Lawrence counties.**Correspondence and Membership
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Sunday November 1, 2009
Ausable Marsh
Peru (Clinton Co.)

This area, where the Ausable River empties into Lake Champlain, is a great location to observe migrant shorebirds and waterfowl. The past few field trips at Ausable have been good for spotting rarities, such as White-eyed Vireo and Tundra Swan, so you never know what might show up! In November, there should be waterfowl and lingering songbird migrants.

Time: 8:30 a.m.**Location:** Meet at the parking area just before the campground entrance.**Leader:** Melanie McCormack**Register** by calling Melanie at (518) 312-6123 or email mruddyduck@aol.com**Saturday, October 10th 2009**
Champlain Valley
Westport (Essex County)

Join Pat and John Thaxton for a birding trip in the Champlain Valley which has a tendency to look absolutely glorious in early October, when migrating waterfowl and raptors show up to take in the views. The trip will start at the Westport Boat Launch and, depending on recent sightings and conditions, take in either Noblewood Park and/or Coon Mountain.

Time: 8:00 a.m.**Location:** Meet at the Westport Boat Launch**Leaders:** Pat and John Thaxton**Register:** by calling Pat and John at (518) 576-4232 or email jpthax5317@aol.com**NABA's 2009 Lake Placid Butterfly Count**

After being delayed for four days, as we waited for rain to abate and cool weather to turn more seasonal to permit the milkweed to open, this year's count was held on July 15th. By then, weather conditions improved sufficiently to proceed, but, nonetheless, there was very little milkweed or other nectaring sources in bloom. We tallied fewer than average number of species and individual butterflies, likely due to the cool rainy weather which persisted in the weeks prior to count. Notable were the low numbers for Monarch (3), White Admiral (1) and a total absence of Bog Coppers for the first time in the count's history. Yet, several species such as Great Spangled and Atlantic Fritillaries were observed in near record numbers.

Canadian Tiger Swallowtail—2, Cabbage White—40, Clouded Sulphur—15, Orange Sulphur—3, Pink-edged Sulphur—4, Coral Hairstreak—1, Great Spangled Fritillary—14, Atlantis Fritillary—20, Meadow Fritillary—9, Harris' Checkerspot—3, Mourning Cloak—2, Milbert's Tortoiseshell—2, White Admiral—1, Northern Pearly-eye—2, Eyed Brown—2, Little Wood Satyr—1, Common Ringlet—4, Monarch—3, Least Skipper—2, European Skipper—24, Peck's Skipper—9, Tawny-edged Skipper—4, Long Dash—11, Northern Broken Dash—1, Dun—5, sulphur sp.—16, fritillary sp.—5.

Total Species: 25

Total Individuals: 200

Participants: John Brown, Linda LaPan, Larry Master, Ted Mack, Janet Mihuc, Lewis Rosenberg, Sheila Rosenberg (compiler), John Thaxton, Pat Thaxton.

—Sheila Rosenberg

The Smitty Creek Bird Banding Station

The Smitty Creek Bird Banding Station at Paul Smith's College finished its third year banding songbirds as part of an international banding program called Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS). MAPS was created by the Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) in Pt. Reyes, CA and today comprises more than 1000 banding stations in North America. The data collected with MAPS protocol is important because the methods enable scientists to understand why bird populations are declining. That is, despite the fact that populations of many bird species have been documented to be declining, those data sets don't demonstrate the proximate causes of decline (such as survivorship and reproductive output). MAPS data allows scientists at IBP to isolate the proximate causes (ex., first year survival of yellow warblers drives their population sizes). MAPS data is also analyzed on large spatial scales (ex., bird populations of a region of North America rather than just one National Park) or by habits (migratory or nesting habits).

It is too soon to analyze the data for Smitty Creek as we need (and are committed to gathering) at least 10 years of data. Still, we can report that this year we banded 62 songbirds, collected data on 5 birds that we didn't band (such as hummingbirds which are not part of the study), and recaptured 17 birds that were banded during the last two years, for a total of 84 birds this breeding season. Some of our favorite birds that we banded include black throated blue warblers, hermit thrushes, rose breasted grosbeaks, golden crowned kinglets, Blackburnian warblers, winter wrens, and a family of yellow-bellied sapsuckers. This is in the range of the number of birds that were banded in each of the previous years.

We are grateful to the Joan and Joseph Cullman Conservation Foundation who funded hiring Kelly Hoffman an undergraduate student from Paul Smith's College (PSC). Kelly just finished her freshmen year in the forestry program at PSC and has a strong interest in understanding all of the components of northern forests. Working with her was great fun because she was truly awestruck by her experience. Many birders have forgotten what a thrill it is to identify or observe common birds. Kelly loved every blue jay that she



banded.

We are also grateful to Paul Smith's College Faculty Research and Development Committee who funded hiring Melanie McCormack a master's student from Green Mountain College in Vermont. Melanie said, "For me the highlight of operating a MAPS banding station was being able to see resident birds throughout the breeding season. I feel that just one season provides so much information on fledgling dates, different plumages, and bird behavior. The most exciting day for me was when we caught our first fledgling--a pin-feather covered white-throated sparrow. Banding birds during migration is exciting because of the species variety, but banding during the breeding season is more rewarding because you see birds carrying out the thing that they traveled thousands of miles to do successfully--reproduce. I was also surprised at the numbers of recaptures from previous years. Even though I've known that birds return to the same location to breed each year it was still amazing to see how they return to precisely the same spot, the same net, each year to breed. With the number of fledglings we banded this year I'm sure they are returning because they have such success in the rich forested habitat that Smitty Creek provides."

Smitty Creek was adopted by the Fisheries and Wildlife Science Program Paul Smith's College through the NY DEC's Adopt-a-Natural-Resource Stewardship Program. As part of this program, PSC students collect data for classes such as Forest Soils, Ichthyology, and Stream Ecology and Management. We hope that in the long term the MAPS data can be combined with the data collected by students in their natural resource classes to understand the bird populations at a local level.

—Jorie Favreau



Joseph & Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation/NNYA/Wild Center Naturalist Intern Report

As an artist, biologist, and naturalist, birds have always been of particular interest to me. I have been observing them for as long as I remember. As many of you know, the things one can learn simply by careful observation are innumerable. During these past few months as the NNY Audubon Intern at The Wild Center museum I have had opportunity to share these gathered observations with others while learning quite a bit more myself. I've been a casual birder all my life, knowing more than most about birds and loving them dearly, but few early mornings out with the pros and a few out on my own earlier this summer were more than enough to inspire the self-motivation to finally learn *all* the little warblers, vireos, and flycatchers.

Throughout the season, I encouraged people on my trips to find joy in observing all and any birds we encountered; to do more than simply go out in search of only one never-before sighted species. I wanted my teams of birders to get excited about any sightings we had. Experience levels on the trips ranged from the never-birded-before to seasoned birders who were more knowledgeable than me. All of these people together often made for wonderful birding groups. The trips I enjoyed most were the ones where my group and I worked as a team to figure out just what it was that we were looking at. Though I knew for the most part what we were seeing and hearing, I certainly have plenty more to learn.

Birding is an art of quiet observation. A walk in the woods through fragrant spruce/fir forest is, on its own, quite pleasing to the senses. On the more bird-active mornings we were surrounded by the soft chirps of awakening kinglets, chickadees, and (almost always) yellow-rumped warblers beginning their days several yards from where we were standing. This, for me, is better than even the strongest cup of espresso in the

morning; not to say that coffee did not help me get to the birding sites on time. One of the moments I loved most this summer was seeing a large tamarack silhouetted by the sun, its branches dripping with little golden-crowned kinglets dangling from nearly every twig. The tiny birds flitted in and out of view and though the tree was very near I don't believe that any one of us got a solid look at a kinglet just then. The sight had to be taken in as a whole.

I studied primarily art in school, and when I tell people this they look surprised. I usually follow up the statement with a quick and reassuring, "...but my minors were biology and outdoor studies!" Even so, birds permeate all my passions. I never turn off "bird-mode". The majority of my artwork, in recent years, had involved our little feathered friends. Even when I don't intend to make an artwork of a bird, of all the sketches I have done the ones I usually choose to develop are those that include some sort of bird subject. I can't help it. For me, all species of birds indicate some level of wilderness and wildness, a feeling and the sense that I am out of the way, in the woods, and undisturbed by the rest of the world. I want to thank everybody at NNYA for a beautiful summer and the opportunity to do something I love.

This past spring I graduated from St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York with a major in Fine Arts and minors in Biology and Outdoor Studies. Last summer I traveled to the Peruvian rainforest with my ornithology professor to assist her with her ongoing research of obligate army-ant following birds. They are the dull-colored birds of the understory that refuse to forage anywhere except at army ant swarms, snatching up insects and other little creatures that are scared up by the ants (which sting, just like nearly everything else in the rainforest). I'm still working on shaping plans for the future. Next year will be spent in Canton creating a portfolio of artwork for application to an arts graduate program, if I don't choose to go into the sciences, that is. I will also be teaching horseback riding lessons throughout the year.

—April Costa



Photograph by Carl Heilman II

Conservatively Speaking

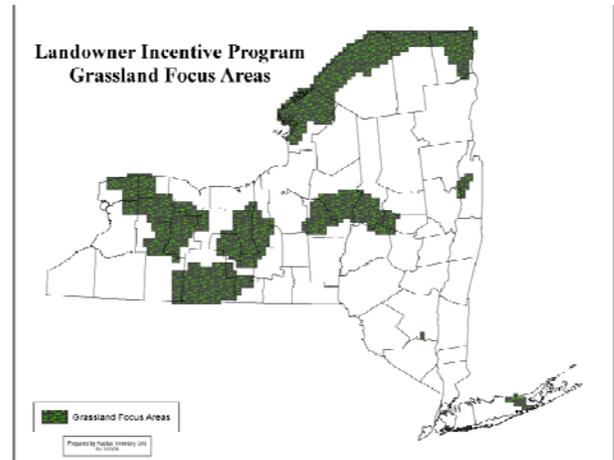
Grassland Management and Protection

According to the 2009 *State of the Birds Report* released by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, grassland birds are among the fastest and most consistently declining birds in North America. Fifty-five percent of grassland species are showing significant declines likely because only about 2% of the tall-grass prairie that existed in the early 1800s still remains. While the traditional habitats most commonly considered to be grasslands are the tall and short-grass prairies of the Midwest, some of the common land-cover types in New York also provide habitat for grassland birds. These include hayfields, pastures, fallow fields, and other agricultural lands, as well as recently abandoned agricultural fields, landfills, airports, and a variety of other uses that maintain the land cover in very early successional stages. In other words, grassland habitat in New York is primarily the result of human activity. Although birds may settle in these alternative grasslands, frequent haying, and overgrazing can create “ecological traps” where birds try to nest but fail to raise their young. Farmland conservation programs provide the best hope for grassland birds and other wildlife.

Over the past 40 years, Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) data for New York show steep (& alarming) population declines: Northern Harrier > 74%, Upland Sandpiper > 93%, Grasshopper Sparrow > 97%, and Henslow’s Sparrow > 99%. Additionally, other grassland species in decline in New York include: Short-eared Owl (thought to be extirpated as a breeder), Loggerhead Shrike (also thought to be extirpated as a breeder), Horned Lark, Sedge Wren, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Bobolink, and Eastern Meadowlark. The primary cause of grassland species decline in the northeastern United States is abandonment of agricultural lands, causing habitat loss as land reverts to later successional stages, or development. Remaining potential habitat is also being lost or severely degraded by intensified agricultural practices such as conversion to row crops or increasingly early and frequent mowing of hayfields.

Since most grassland habitat in the United States is privately owned, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering grants for landowners to enhance or restore critical grassland habitat for wildlife through its **Landowner Incentive Program** (LIP). In New York, the LIP funds, totaling \$300,000, are available through the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The DEC is beginning the second round of awards for the Landowner Incentive Program. Last year, during the first round, 14 applications were accepted, representing a total of 1,200 acres with a range of 45 to 100 acres each. Audubon New York supports the Landowner Incentive Program by helping to develop management plans for enrolled properties, and monitors the birds found on the property. Private landowners who own 10 or more grassland acres could be eligible for grants. Landowners who are awarded grants receive technical guidance and financial incentives for the protection of grassland species on their land at the rate of \$55 to \$60 per acre per year.

Partners in the grassland conservation effort have identified 8 focus areas within New York (shown below) where the greatest results can be achieved by grassland conservation initiatives such as the Landowner Incentive Program.



To learn more about the program and obtain an application form, visit the Landowner Incentive Program page at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/32722.html on the DEC website. For questions or comments regarding the program, send an email to F&WLIP@gw.dec.state.ny.us or call (518) 402-8910. Mike Morgan of Audubon New York can also be contacted for information at mmorgan@audubon.org or (607) 254-2487. The deadline for pre-application submission is Aug. 1, 2009.

For those interested in detailed information on grassland management, Audubon New York recently released a new guide titled, *Plan for Conserving Grassland Birds in New York*, written by Michael Morgan and Michael Burger, completed under contract with the NYS DEC. This groundbreaking assessment finds that private landowners and farmland preservation hold the key to the future survival of grassland species. Audubon New York’s comprehensive plan will help guide new and ongoing efforts to curb the precipitous decline of grassland birds in the State. The plan can be found on the Audubon New York web site at: www.ny.audubon.org/PDFs/ConservationPlan-GrasslandBirds-NY.pdf.

The successful collaboration between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Audubon New York, and private landowners will provide significant benefits for species that inhabit New York’s grasslands.

—Joan Collins

NNYA Board of Directors Meeting
Sunday, October 4th, 10:30 a.m.
The Wild Center

Crown Point Banding Station Report

The spring banding station on the 360-acre grounds of the Crown Point State Historic Site opened for the 34th consecutive season of banding between 8-25 May. Operated by the Crown Point Banding Association (CPBA), through an agreement with the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP), the station is located in thickets of hawthorn-juniper west of His Majesty's Fort. The modest totals of 57 species and 457 individual birds were a slight improvement over May 2008 [51 sp., 384 birds], but below usual expectations. Notable for their absence were Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers, with no major waves and just 20 banded.

The '09 totals: 1 Hairy Woodpecker; 3 Northern Flicker; 1 Pileated Woodpecker; 10 "Traill's" Flycatcher; 7 Least Flycatcher; 1 Eastern Phoebe; 7 Great Crested Flycatcher; 1 Eastern Kingbird; 2 Warbling Vireo; 1 Red-eyed Vireo; 32 Blue Jay; 3 Tree Swallow; 2 Barn Swallow; 12 Black-capped Chickadee; 8 House Wren; 1 Winter Wren; 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglet; 6 Eastern Bluebird; 3 Veery; 1 Swainson's Thrush; 7 Wood Thrush; 15 American Robin; 44 Gray Catbird; 3 Brown Thrasher; 12 Cedar Waxwing; 1 Tennessee Warbler; 4 Nashville Warbler; 1 Northern Parula; 18 Yellow Warbler; 2 Chestnut-sided Warbler; 9 Magnolia Warbler; 2 Cape May Warbler; 1 Black-throated Blue Warbler; 20 Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler; 2 Prairie Warbler; 3 Blackpoll Warbler; 2 Black-and-white Warbler; 11 American Redstart; 1 Ovenbird; 4 Northern Waterthrush; 38 Common Yellowthroat; 3 Wilson's Warbler; 3 Eastern Towhee; 2 Chipping Sparrow; 1 Field Sparrow; 2 Savannah Sparrow; 10 Song Sparrow; 9 Lincoln's Sparrow; 6 White-throated Sparrow; 3 White-crowned Sparrow; 5 Northern Cardinal; 2 Rose-breasted Grosbeak; 1 Indigo Bunting; 3 Common Grackle; 3 Brown-headed Cowbird; 22 Baltimore Oriole; 78 American Goldfinch. TOTAL: 457 individuals of 57 species.

There were returns of 30 birds of a dozen species banded at Crown Point in previous years, the oldest a Black-capped Chickadee and a Baltimore Oriole, each now at least five years, 11 months old. Warbler variety was a respectable 17 banded species (plus three others present), but short of the 23 species banded in 2007. Boreal warblers included Tennessee, Cape May, Blackpoll, and Wilson's, while two Prairie Warblers were near the northern edge of their range. A Pileated Woodpecker banded 17 May was the fifth netted since 1997, and three Eastern Towhees set a new station record. Immature Bald Eagles were seen on five days, with a low kettle of seven subadults and a nearby adult just overhead on 10 May. A kettle of 22 Turkey Vultures also circled the forts on 21 May. Other notable species seen or heard, but not banded, included Black-billed Cuckoo, Common Nighthawk, Northern Mockingbird, Blue-winged Warbler, and Orchard Oriole. Even when the banding is slow, the birding is usually good at the tip of the peninsula.

Groups included Bolton, Minerva, Moriah, and Whitehall Central Schools, as well as an environmental science class from North Country Community College, but the number of students was down, with some expected classes unable to leave their school districts, due to budget constraints. A program for adjudicated youth, who had visited the

station for the past dozen years, was a similar victim of state budget cuts. The number of individuals and families increased, however, bringing 200+ visitors to the station over the 18 days.

Starting in 1990, students and other visitors who release a bird each receive a certificate, and since the inception of the program a total of 1,186 certificates have been issued. Polaroid photos of the student holding their bird prior to release have now been replaced by digital shots. If a released bird returns in a subsequent year, or is encountered elsewhere, the person is notified, with 63 such student bird returns to date. Adult visitors sometimes recall "their" bird, released as a child at Crown Point a decade or more ago.

Banders Mike Peterson & Gary Lee camped at the station and Gordon Howard commuted daily from Auger Lake. Others who spent up to several nights at the station in order to help before dawn and until dusk included Tom Barber of Burlington, VT; Wendy Burkowski of Bolton Landing; Carolyn & Pierre Cyr and Woody Cyr of Warrensburg; Rob Corey & Jo-Anne MacKenzie and Brenna Corey of Baie d'Urfé, QC; Melanie McCormack of West Chazy; and Susan French Peterson of Montréal, QC. MaryAnne Allen & Cecelia Wojciukiewicz of Witherbee assisted on days with school groups. We're especially grateful to those who helped transport various parts of the banding station from, and back to, Elizabethtown, Inlet, and New Jersey: MaryAnne & Mike Allen, Rudy Bobka, Malinda Chapman, Stan Corneille, Judy Heintz, Gordon Howard, Dan Lee, Gary Lee, and Bob Wei. And countless visitors showed a ready willingness to grab a sport radio and check nets.

OPRHP management and staff from the Albany and Saratoga/Capital District offices paid site visits and met with representatives of CPBA and Historic Site personnel to view the banding area and discuss possible removal of invasive plants, especially Common Buckthorn. Much of what was hawthorn-juniper-cedar thickets in 1976 is now open field or reforested with white pine and green ash. Special thanks go to Historic Site Manager Thomas Hughes, Jake Putnam, and the rest of the Crown Point staff for their continued cooperation and many kindnesses. We greatly appreciate the interest in habitat maintenance of Ray Perry and Traynor Biasioli at OPRHP in Albany, as well as that of Regional Director Alane Ball Chinian, Asst. Regional Director Bob Kuhn, and Natural Resource Steward Biologist Casey Holzworth of OPRHP in Saratoga Springs. —Mike Peterson



NNYA Annual Meeting/Outing at Altona Flat Rock

NNYA held its annual meeting/outing at Altona Flat Rock, an 18-mile long, 3-mile wide sandstone barren created by the catastrophic drainage of proglacial Lake Iroquois 12,000 years ago. Almost 5,000 acres of pine barrens and forest owned by the Miner Institute surround the Flat Rock area and support 120 species of birds, 30 species of mammals and 15 herptiles.

More than twenty NNYA members showed up and began the day with a morning-long bird walk led by Dr. Kenneth Adams of SUNY Plattsburgh. Dr. Adams selected an ecosystem in the upper Little Chazy watershed (forest, river, bog, fen, pine barren) that seemed most promising for the day and, sure enough, several members of our group saw the first Acadian flycatcher ever recorded in Clinton County (special credit goes to NNYA member Ted Mack, who heard the bird and noted the habitat—a thick stand of mature hemlocks hard by a stream).

After managing to negotiate our way across a very swollen stream we repaired to the cabin on the Minter institute's property and had lunch while President Charlotte Demers conducted a brief meeting during which the board members present voted in your newest director, Angelina Ross, a DEC wildlife management specialist who had done, and continues to do, extensive research on Adirondack spruce grouse populations.

Toward the end of lunch, Dr. Adams reached into bag full of raffle tickets and pulled out the winner of this year's prize, a Swarovski ST-80 spotting scope with a 20X-60X zoom lens and a carrying case. The winner: Lois Konikowski, a new donor from Silver Lake, NY & Florida.

Dr. Kenneth Adam is a professor at Plattsburgh State University where he teaches courses in Plant Ecology, Forest Ecology and Management and Wildlife Ecology and Management. His primary research interests are the effects of disturbance on ecosystem development. Since 1974 Ken has utilized forest stands owned by the William H. Miner Research Institute in Chazy, New York to study the ecological effects of silvicultural treatments, fire, and most recently, ice storm impacts. Ken received a PhD in forest ecology from the College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse, NY.

—JohnThaxton



Photographs by Carl Heilman II

Poetry Corner

Flying Crooked

The butterfly, a cabbage-white,
(His honest idiocy of flight)
Will never now, it is too late,
Master the art of flying straight,
Yet has—who knows so well as I?—
A just sense of how not to fly:
He lurches here and here by guess
And God and hope and hopelessness.
Even the aerobic swift
Has not his flying-crooked gift.

—Robert Graves



Editor's Note

When it started drizzling gently at the junction of the trails to Gothics and Saddleback I decided on behalf of the group to ascend the latter peak, arguing that for the sake of time and the eight children in our care it seemed reckless to climb the wide open slide on Gothics in the rain, even if the forecast proved wrong and we wouldn't experience an electrical storm while hoisting ourselves up a steel cable bolted into bedrock rising at a fifty degree angle towards the summit. I characterized the view from the top of Saddleback as completely out of sight, as a musician friend of mine observed that it looked to him like an old black and white television he once owned that produced no images nor even rolling lines, only luminous snow that looked like a mob of eye-floaters breaking into a square dance. The light rain morphed into sleet that resonated in my rain jacket hood as loudly and wildly as fine road gravel ricochets in my wheel wells, and after a quick photo we departed the summit having spent perhaps ninety seconds checking out the fifty feet of visibility and dodging hail.

It rained a lot this spring and summer, and for reasons we feel perfectly content never to discover we got away with every NNYA and Adirondack Birding Festival trip we led, from a paddle on Lake Everest to a hike on the Northville/Lake Placid Trail to a paddle on South Inlet; it rained on the way home from the latter two journeys. All that rain, I suspect, drowned the better part of the black fly population in their sleep, or else the mosquitoes ate them soon as they emerged. I predict that we will have an outstanding foliage season for all the rain and have a wish in for a winter of continuous but manageable snow to balance last year's skiless, for me, March.

I hear from the staff at The Wild Center that the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation/NNYA Naturalist Intern, April Costa, had people show up for every trip and bird walk she led, thanks largely to an invigorated publicity effort. I include inside April's account of her summer as the Naturalist Intern. I also included Dr. Jorie Favreau's overview of the Smitty Creek Bird Banding Station, a MAPS facility, and a Paul Smiths student whose salary the Cullman Foundation paid.

Joan Collins' *Conservatively Speaking* column makes it plain as day how badly grassland birds are faring and discusses a plan in place to pay farmers and large landowners to set aside acreage for these rapidly declining species. Mike Peterson reports on modest numbers of birds at the Crown Point Banding Station, and Sheila Rosenberg summarizes the NABA 2009 Lake Placid Butterfly Count, which kept getting postponed because of rain and weather too cold for the milkweed to blossom. Read about how, at the NNYA Annual Meeting/Outing, we set a first-ever record for a bird in Clinton County.

I feel certain I speak on behalf of the entire membership when I say, con brio, thank you Carl Heilman II for letting me use your photographs to illustrate this issue of the newsletter. I've admired Carl's work for many years and feel honored to present some of it in the newsletter. See more of Carl's work at www.carlheilman.com.

—John Thaxton