

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 38 Number 1

March-May 2010



Saturday, March 6th, 2010, 1:00 p.m.
The Wild Center
Golden-Winged Warblers
Speaker: Dr. Tom Langen

In an effort to slow down the stunningly rapid population decline of golden-winged warblers, Dr. Tom Langen and his colleagues, partially funded by a grant from the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation, have studied the loss and management of habitat crucial to the species survival. A combination of habitat loss and hybridization with blue-winged warblers, among other factors, has placed enormous stress on New York's, and North America's, golden-winged warblers. Changes in land cover have reduced the availability of shrubby, second growth habitats favored for breeding for this species. Abandonment of farmland has resulted in much shrubby vegetation cover favored for breeding by golden-winged, but if not properly managed to maintain the shrubby successional stage, this breeding habitat declines as abandoned farms grow fairly quickly into forests.

Blue-winged warbler populations, meanwhile, have surged in recent decades, with the result that extensive hybridization between species continues to result with blue-winged replacing golden-winged in much of its traditional habitat. Despite these grim trends, Dr. Langen has identified an unlikely source of permanent golden-winged habitat: electrical transmission corridors. Utility companies maintain the corridor rights-of-way using mechanical or chemical means to control vegetation and growth, which might very well, with appropriate timing protocols, save this gorgeous species.

Dr. Tom Langen, in collaboration with the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, has been studying golden-winged warblers in the St. Lawrence Valley, the Adirondack Mountains and the Champlain Valley since 2002. He teaches Environmental Science at Clarkson University. *All Photographs this issue by Mark Bowie*



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**Sunday, March 13th,
 11:00 a.m.**
**American Kestrel Nest
 Project—Final Workshop
 Newcomb VIC**

Plan to attend the final kestrel nest box project workshop, where NNYA board members and members at large will demonstrate how to construct pre-fabricated nest boxes, 36 of which we plan to deploy in order to help this New York State endangered species.

There will be a live kestrel in attendance for a demonstration.

Register: by calling the Newcomb VIC @ (518) 582-2000.

NNYA

Northern New York Audubon, Inc.

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Northern New York Audubon Society,
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.

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Saturday, March 13, 2010 Late Winter Birds of the Adirondacks Bloomingdale Bog

Time: 8:30-10:30 a.m.

Leader: Brian McAllister

Registration: Call the Paul Smith's VIC at (518) 327-3000

Directions will be given out at time of registration. This event is jointly sponsored with the Paul Smith's Visitor Interpretive Center.

Sunday, April 11, 2010 Ausable Marsh, Peru

Time: 8 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

This location, where the Ausable River empties into Lake Champlain, is a great location to observe waterfowl and early spring migrants.

April or May, 2010 Spring Wildflowers & Early Migrants Indian Creek Nature Center, Canton

Time: 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Distance: Under 1 mile on level terrain.

Meet: At the East End Entrance. Take Route 68 to Rensselaer Falls Road, and travel 2.5 miles – the East End Entrance will be on your left (there is a barn on the right).

Hike Leader: Peter O'Shea (315) 848-2178

Call Peter in mid-April to find out trip date.

This trip is jointly sponsored by the Indian Creek Nature Center.

Saturday May 1, 2010

Huntington Wildlife Forest, Newcomb

Time: 9 a.m.

Meet: At the Adirondack Ecological Center, 6312 State Route 28N Newcomb, NY, approximately a mile west of the Newcomb VIC.

Leader: Charlotte Demers

Bring: Appropriate layers of apparel, water and insect repellent.

Registration: By sending an email to cde-mers@frontiernet.net or calling (518) 582-2157

Description: A beautiful 4 mile walk in the privately owned Huntington Wildlife Forest. We will be walking along a level dirt road that parallels a lovely marsh at the west end of Rich Lake. The walk continues to a small pond and includes both conifer and hardwood habitats. Plan on two to three hours of easy walking.

Saturday, May 8, 2010

Hulls Falls Road, Keene Valley

Watch birds with Northern New York Audubon member Ruth Kuhfahl. On a previous year's May walk in this diverse habitat we found nesting Pine warblers, Solitary sandpiper and Indigo bunting. Jointly sponsored by the Hurricane Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club and Northern New York Audubon.

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Leaders: Ruth Kuhfahl and Pat & John Thaxton

Registration: Call Ruth Kuhfahl at (518) 576-4699

Saturday, May 8, 2010

Point au Roche on Lake Champlain, Beekmantown

Time: 8 a.m.

Meet: At the Nature Center entrance.

Leader: Judy Heintz

Registration: Call Judy at (518) 563-5273 or email heintzjf@verizon.net

This field trip will precede the Eco Fair at Point au Roche which begins at 10 a.m. There will be tables, displays, workshops, and hikes at the Eco Fair.

Saturday, May 15, 2010

Breakfast with the Birds, Keene Valley

Description: Join Pat and John Thaxton on the deck of their house in Keene for coffee, cake, fruit, juice and birds.

Directions: From the intersection of Route 73 & 9N South (between Keene & Keene Valley), turn east towards Elizabethtown; go approximately 2 miles uphill to where the road levels and turn onto Baxter Mountain Lane (just beyond little yellow house) on right; go past Round Top Lane on left, pass a house on left as road levels, look for driveway on right, #84, and take it to the end.

Registration: Contact Pat & John Thaxton, 518.576.4232, or email JPThax5317@aol.com.

Sunday, May 16, 2010

Indian Creek Nature Center, Canton

Time: 7 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Distance: Approximately 2 miles on level trails

Leaders: Joan Collins and Mary Beth Warburton

Meet: At the main parking area for Indian Creek Nature Center

Register: by calling Joan at (315) 261-4246 jecol-lins@twcny.rr.com or Mary Beth at (315) 268-0150 mbwarburton@verizon.net

Come enjoy a spring bird walk at Indian Creek Nature Center. Participants will view a wide variety of species on a hike through shrubland, marsh, wetland, and forest habitats along the Tower and Succession Trails. A spotting scope will be used to view birds on Lower Lake from the top of the observation tower. Bring binoculars!

This trip is jointly sponsored with Indian Creek Nature Center.

Saturday, May 22, 2010

Massawepie Mire, Colton

Time: 7:00 a.m.

Leaders: Joan Collins, Eileen & Tom Wheeler

Register: by calling Joan at (315) 261-4246 jecol-lins@twcny.rr.com or Eileen Wheeler (315) 386-2482 ei-wheeler@yahoo.com.

Massawepie Mire is the largest bog (actually a fen!) in New York State. We will walk the old, level railroad bed (now a dirt road) for ~ 4 miles round trip and visit the South Branch of the Grass River location near the trailhead. There will also be an optional 2 mile round-trip hike on the Mountaineer Trail along scenic Massawepie Lake in the afternoon. Boreal birds, bog plants, and scenic views will be our focus!

This trip is jointly sponsored with the Laurentian Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club. In the event of inclement weather on May 22nd, Sunday May 23rd will be an alternate date for the field trip.

Tuesday, June 1, 2010

Pharaoh Lakes Wilderness Area

Time: 6 a.m. (gasp)

Meet: At the trailhead parking lot on the south side of Rt. 74, 4 miles east of Schroon Lake Exit 28 on the Northway (Rt. 87). This spot is also 0.2 miles west of the entrance to Paradox Lake Campsite.

Leaders: Malinda & Glen Chapman

Register: Please contact Malinda & Glen in Ticonderoga at 518-585-9810 or chapamini@aol.com

Glen and Malinda Chapman will lead an early morning bird walk in the Pharaoh Lakes Wilderness area. They will follow the gentle Long Swing Trail through a variety of habitats - under huge pine forests and along wetlands towards Crane Pond. Warblers and wildflowers await!

2009 Christmas Bird Counts

Elizabethtown CBC

Elizabethtown NY – 44° 13' N 73° 36' W centered at Essex County courthouse. The 2009 count was held on Sunday December 20 from 4:30 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. Eighteen observers participated in the count for a total of 42.75 party-hours, covering 7.5 miles on foot, 351 miles by car and 3.5 miles on snowshoe. Weather was brisk with temperatures ranging from 0° F in the morning and warming to 24° F by the afternoon. There was a steady wind in the morning particularly in the open areas. Cloud cover ranged from mostly cloudy in the morning to clear by the afternoon. Snow cover ranged from a dusting in the wind swept areas to 12 inches in the more protected woodland areas. Still water was frozen while moving water was partly open. No precipitation on count day.

Canada Goose 136, Mallard 72, Ruffed Grouse 10, Wild Turkey 61, Bald Eagle 1, Cooper's Hawk 1, Northern Goshawk 1, Accipiter sp. 1, Red-tailed Hawk 8, Rough-legged Hawk 1, Rock Pigeon 36, Mourning Dove 116, Eastern Screech-Owl 1, Barred Owl 1, Belted Kingfisher 1, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1**, Downy Woodpecker 35, Hairy Woodpecker 21, Northern Shrike 2, Blue Jay 312, American Crow 254, Common Raven 11, Black-capped Chickadee 433, Tufted Titmouse 19, Red-breasted Nuthatch 102, White-breasted Nuthatch 27, Brown Creeper 9, Golden-crowned Kinglet 10, American Robin 3, European Starling 102, Cedar Waxwing 18, American Tree Sparrow 77, **Field Sparrow 2**, White-throated Sparrow 1, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco 132, Snow Bunting 66, Northern Cardinal 16, Purple Finch 4, American Goldfinch 135, House Sparrow 52.

Totals: 40 species and 2294 individuals.

Participants: Becky Bosley, Robin Brown, Joan Collins, Una Carey-Creedon, Charlotte Demers, Denise Griffin, Megan Murphy, Dan Nickerson, Stan Oliva, Hank Stebbins, Nancy Slack, Carole Slatkin, Eric Teed, John Thaxton, Pat Thaxton, Eve Ticknor, Yvette Tillema, and Kathleen Wiley.

50th Ferrisburgh CBC

Thirty-nine people took to the field to observe and count, with an additional two feeder counters. The day was clear but cold with winds building through the day, especially on the lake.

Common Loon 21, red-necked grebe 2, horned grebe 17, great blue heron 1, Canada goose 141, mallard 238, American black duck 42, common goldeneye 975, bufflehead 27, hooded merganser 55, common merganser 171, red-breasted merganser 1, redhead 1, wood duck 2, sharp-shinned hawk 1, Cooper's hawk 8, red-tailed hawk 57, rough-legged hawk 15, bald eagle 16, northern harrier 5, American Kestrel 2, peregrine falcon 3, ruffed grouse 3, ring-necked pheasant 2, wild turkey 967, great black-backed gull 30, herring gull 40, ring-billed gull 378, Bonaparte's gull 1, rock pigeon 620, mourning dove 495, eastern screech owl 8, great horned owl 12, barred owl 1, long-eared owl 1, belted kingfisher 2, northern flicker 6, pileated woodpecker 9, hairy woodpecker 32, downy woodpecker 72, red-bellied woodpecker 11, northern shrike 2, blue jay 271, common raven 33, American crow 730, horned lark 438, black-chipped chickadee 664, tufted titmouse 112, white-breasted nuthatch 16, red-breasted nuthatch 16, brown creeper 8, Carolina wren 1,



American robin 183, eastern bluebird 19, hermit thrush 1, golden-crowned kinglet 11, European starling 1927, cedar waxwing 309, northern cardinal 152, dark-eyed junco 214, American tree sparrow 433, white-throated sparrow 5, song sparrow 3, Lapland longspur 1, snow bunting 1905, red-winged blackbird 6, brown-headed cowbird, purple finch 2, house finch 253, American goldfinch 423, house sparrow 922 .

Totals: 13,097 birds of 71 species. Both these are below our 10-year average (79 species and 18,500 birds).

Highlights: HERMIT THRUSH, REDHEAD, LONG-EARED OWL, and BONAPARTE'S GULL.

There was a general lack of winter finches – no pine siskins or redpolls for example. We missed northern mockingbird for the first time since 1983 (though we rarely see many). Waterfowl species numbers were down. The regulars appeared (though we did miss snow goose for the first time in seven years) – but there were fewer rarities – no scoters or scaup. Cooper's hawk numbers have been rising and this year's eight was exceeded only by last year's count of nine. On the other hand, we found only one sharp-shinned hawk, the lowest total since 1979. Kestrels returned after a three-year absence; and three peregrine falcons represent a high for the count. Gamebirds have been doing well. Our 367 wild turkey was the highest total in five years; pheasants made an appearance for the fourth straight year; and ruffed grouse returned after an absence last year, though their numbers (3) were still low. For the second straight year we had double digits (11) of red-bellied woodpeckers. Among more common birds, we saw the lowest chickadee total (664) since 1992; and European starlings (1927) since 1993. Highest brown-headed cowbird (40) total since 1975 fueled by 26 in the Dead Creek territory

Plattsburgh CBC

2009 Christmas Bird Count summary for the Plattsburgh, NY/VT (NYPL) circle 44°39'N 73°29'W as described in 1986 with the center at the former Plattsburgh Air Force Base. The 2009 count was held on Sunday, December 20, 2009 from 7:30 to 16:30 with temperatures ranging from 4 to 12°F under cloudy skies. The north to northwest winds reached more than 20mph near Lake Champlain, but were 6-10mph inland.

31 field workers logged 60 party hours and a total of 622 miles of which 12.5 miles and 12.75 hours were on foot. The 17 feeder watchers spent 34 hours at feeders.

Totals: 57 species recorded and 10449 individuals.

Snow Goose 1, Canada Goose 185, American Black Duck 10, Mallard 646, Bufflehead 2, Common Goldeneye 594, Hooded Merganser 1, Common Merganser 384, Ring-necked Pheasant 2, Ruffed Grouse 6, Wild Turkey 61, Common Loon 2, Red-throated Loon 1, loon species 1, Horned Grebe 3 Great Blue Heron 2, Northern Harrier 1, Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Cooper's Hawk 3, Northern Goshawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk 18, Rough-legged Hawk 2, Ring-billed Gull 145, Herring Gull 82, Great-blackbacked Gull 31, Rock Pigeon 730, Mourning Dove 263, Eastern Screech Owl 1, Downy Woodpecker 73, Hairy Woodpecker 38, Pileated Woodpecker 8, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1, Blue Jay 221, American Crow 3753, Common Raven 4, Horned Lark 67, Black-capped Chickadee 583, Tufted Titmouse 23, Red-breasted Nuthatch 20, White-breasted Nuthatch 60, Brown Creeper 3, House Wren 1, Golden-crowned Kinglet 2, Eastern Bluebird 7, American Robin 24, Northern Mockingbird 1, European Starling 671, Cedar Waxwing 24, American Tree Sparrow 131, White-throated Sparrow 1, Dark-eyed Junco 291, Snow Bunting 307, Northern Cardinal 108, Red-winged Blackbird 5, Brown-headed Cowbird 36, House Finch 46, American Goldfinch 566, House Sparrow 194

Participants: were Derek Allan, Tom Armstrong, Helen Booth, Bob Booth, John Brown, Gwen Cateenwalla, Jim Cayea, Joy Cayea, Joan Clark, Mike DiNunzio, Julie Dumas, Keitha Farney, Melissa Hart, Holland Fitts, Liz Fitts, Cornelia Forrence, Jan Forsman, Evelyn Fuller, Peter Galvani, Judith Heintz, Euclid Jones, Harold Klein, Bill Krueger, Linda LaPan, Julie Lattrell, Liz Laundrie, Larry Master, Melanie McCormack, Brian McAllister, Janet Mihuc, Charlie Mitchell, Nancy Olsen, Carol Pinney, Jeffrey Rose, Mary Roden-Tice Ingeborg Sapp, Michelle Snyder, Janet Stein, Gary Sturgis, Irma Teittinen, Saana Teittinen-Gordon, Bill Teter, Nora Teter, Steve Tice, Lynn Valenti, Amy Valentine, Dan Vogt, Katie White.

—**Judy Heintz**

54th SARANAC LAKE CBC

Saranac Lake, N.Y. - 44°19'0"N 74°04'23"W, mostly as described 1976, but center 1.2 miles NNE of e. jct. Rt. 86 & Old Ray Brook Rd., Ray Brook and adjusted very slightly (a few seconds) in 2007 to be more precise (using Google Earth). Jan. 2, 2010; 4:30 am to 4:30 pm. Temp. 5° to 25°F. Wind W 2-9 mph. Snow depth 8-10 in. Still water frozen. Moving water partly open. A.M.: cloudy, light snow. PM: cloudy, light snow. Observers: 26 in field in 13-15 parties (non-owling), plus 4 at feeders. Time and Distance: 12 hours at feeders; 3 hours and 25 miles owling. Total party-hours 86.25 and party-miles 375: 30.5 hours and 24.5 miles on foot, 36.25 hours and 325.5 miles by car, 13 hours and 17 miles by XC-skis, 6.5 hours and 8 miles by snowshoes.

Canada Goose 1; Am. Black Duck 8; Mallard 259; Hooded Merganser 1; Ruffed Grouse 8; Wild Turkey 51; Bald Eagle cw; **Falcon sp 1;** Rock Pigeon 108; Mourning Dove 72; Barred Owl 2; Downy Woodpecker 23; Hairy Woodpecker 27; Black-backed Woodpecker 2; Pileated Woodpecker 5; Gray Jay 5; Blue Jay 156; Am. Crow 121; Com. Raven 33; Black-capped Chickadee 592; Boreal Chickadee 4; Red-breasted Nuthatch 76; White-breasted Nuthatch 21; Brown Creeper 2; Golden-crowned Kinglet 22; **Ruby-crowned Kinglet 2;** European Starling 87; American Tree Sparrow cw; White-throated Sparrow 1; Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco 32; Snow Bunting 50; Northern Cardinal 12; Purple Finch 25; Pine Siskin cw; American Goldfinch 932; Evening Grosbeak 72; House Sparrow 14.

Total: 34 species; 2827 individuals.

Participants: John Brown, David Buckley, Shelly Cihan, Joan Collins, Ed Grant, Audrey Hyson, Penny Jacques, Debbie and Ed and Ned and Tassie Kanze, Leslie Karasin, Steve Langdon, Linda LaPan, John Marshall, Larry Master (compiler), Brian McAllister, Matt Medler, Sean O'Brien, Mary O'Dell, Carol Pinney, Liz Resseguie, Nina and Bill Schoch, Pat and John Thaxton, Eileen and Tom Wheeler.

Numbers of species seen were the lowest in two decades, perhaps due to a combination of weather on count day, the bitter cold temperatures in the weeks preceding the count, the near absence of conifer mast, the absence of a flight year for redpolls or waxwings, and/or poor reproductive success last summer for local residents due to the cold and rainy summer weather. Nonetheless, 31 intrepid field observers managed to find 2827 individuals of 34 species. Highlights include a 2 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, a Canada Goose, an unidentified falcon (Merlin or Kestrel), 2 Black-backed Woodpeckers, and 932 American Goldfinches (second highest total ever). Ruby-crowned Kinglets have never been observed previously in the 54 years of this count but two were well seen on count day by two different observers. Debbie Kanze singlehandedly added the three "count period" (three days on either side of count day) birds: Bald Eagle, Tree Sparrow, and Pine Siskin.

Many thanks to all the dedicated participants on this year's count. Next year's count is scheduled for Sunday, January 2, 2011. See you then I hope. —**Larry Master**



Poetry Corner

Songs of Ch'iu-p'u, Three Selections

I

Ch'iu-p'u teems with white gibbons;
They leap and bounce like flying snow.
They tug and pull their young hanging from the branches,
Come down to drink and play with moon in the water.

II

How like a bolt of white silk is this water,
Turning the earth into a flattened sky!
But I would rather seize this moonlit night,
To board a wine-boat and view the flowers.

III

The furnace fire lights up earth and sky,
Red sparks fly pell-mell into purple smoke,
Young men's faces are flushed in the moonlit night,
And a song reverberates in the cold river.

—Li Po

President's Message

On behalf of all the members of Northern New York Audubon, a big "Thank You" to Board of Directors' member John Thaxton, who has been doing double duty as both Newsletter Editor and Secretary to the Board. John will be stepping down as Secretary after completing his three year term. Luckily he will stay on as a board member and continue to edit the newsletter.

And another big "Thank You" to all the people who participated in the Christmas Bird Counts this year. Reports have it that everyone had a good time during their outing and some great birds were seen, including some new species for some circles.

Save the date: Saturday, July 24th, 2010. NNYA will be having its annual outing and meeting at Heaven Hill Farm in Lake Placid. The next newsletter will have more details, but a day of birding in farm fields and upland hardwoods is planned along with an afternoon outing to Henry's Woods.

—Charlotte Demers

Nominating Committee

The nominating committee is pleased to present the following slate for the officers and new members to the Board of Directors. Voting for the slate will be at the NNYA booth at the Great Adirondack Birding Celebration at the Paul Smiths VIC on June 5th, 2010 at 1:00 p.m.

Officers

President: Charlotte Demers (2010-2013)

Treasurer: Amy Freiman (2010-2013)

Recording and Corresponding Secretary: Mary O'Dell (2010-2013)

Directors

Brian McCallister, Kathleen Wiley, Pat Thaxton

NNYA Board Meeting

Saturday, March 6, 2020, 10:30 a.m. The Wild Center



Azure's Avian Life

Gazing out from the lonely summit of Azure Mountain, gives one a feeling of being on an isolated island overlooking a vast sea of wilderness. It is a magnificent vantage point for viewing the High Peaks to the southeast and out across the St. Lawrence Valley into Canada to the northwest. This remote peak with spectacular cliffs, located in the northwest section of the Adirondack Park, is a wonderful place to observe avian life. It is the wide variety of habitats that are encountered both on the drive along Blue Mountain Road, and on the hike up Azure Mountain's trail, that leaves birders with a long list of observed species.

Beginning in mid-April, warbler species, the colorful "butterflies" of the bird world, begin to return to their nesting areas. By late May, nineteen warbler species can be observed by stopping at wetland areas along Blue Mountain Road, coupled with the hike up Azure Mountain. One of the most beloved warbler species is the Mourning Warbler. It can be found on the side of the mountain above the stream crossing. In the same tangled habitat, Chestnut-sided Warblers, and the gorgeous Indigo Bunting, can also be observed. On a June climb up Azure in 2007, I was surprised to find that the small patch of spruce-fir habitat to the west of the tower was enough to support several high elevation Blackpoll Warblers. This species is a champion migrant that launches from northeastern North America in the fall and makes a nearly 4-day non-stop journey over the Atlantic Ocean to South America!

The boreal habitat at the parking lot is quite a contrast from the predominantly deciduous habitat encountered during most of the climb to the summit. Black-backed Woodpeckers can be observed foraging in the conifers along the parking area in addition to Blue-headed Vireos, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Magnolia Warblers, and usnea-draped conifers attract Northern Parula. The boreal habitat at the trailhead also attracts finches. On a snowshoe climb of Azure in January 2006, I heard the sweet voice of a lovely Pine Grosbeak perched at the top of one of the tall spruces as I stepped out of the car. Pine Grosbeaks nest to our north, and they are one of several finch species that often "irrupt" in large numbers into our area for food during winter.

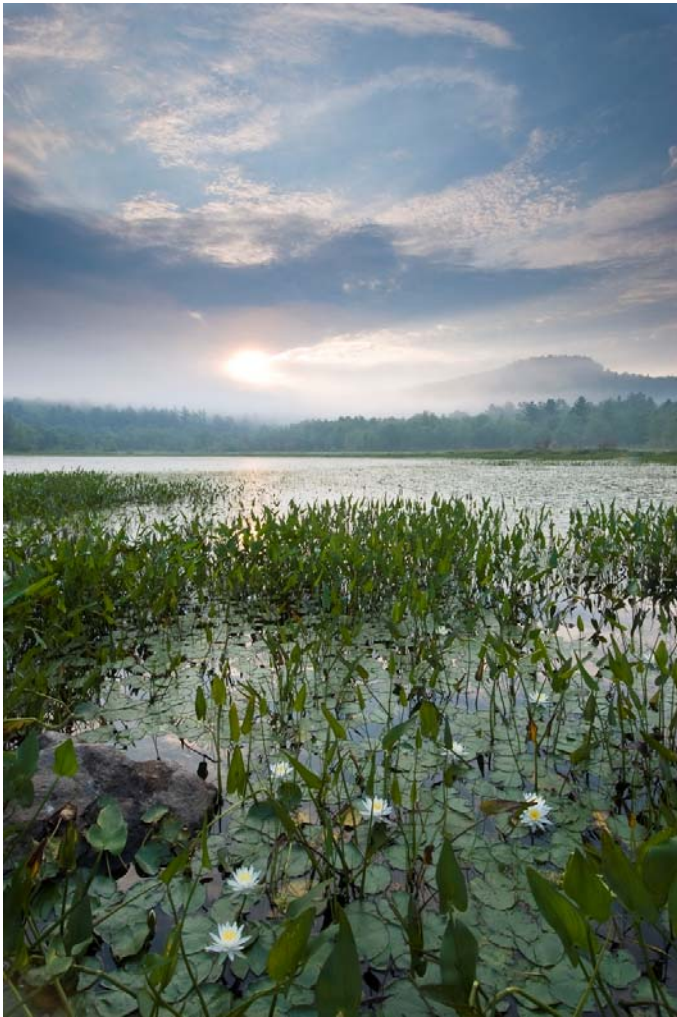
After leaving the boreal area for the trail, there is a dramatic change of habitat. A marshy area is traversed and leads into primarily deciduous forest, home to many woodpecker, flycatcher, vireo, warbler, and sparrow species. Barred Owls can occasionally be heard vocalizing during the day. The "engine-starting" sound of the Ruffed Grouse can be heard at any time of year. The summit area is attractive to

Cedar Waxwings, White-throated Sparrows (“mascot of the north”), and Dark-eyed Juncos.

The sheer cliffs off Azure’s south side provide nesting habitat for Turkey Vultures, Peregrine Falcons, and Common Ravens. The piercing scream of a juvenile Common Raven can be an unforgettable experience! The summit of Azure is known to be a terrific location to observe migrating raptors throughout the fall, particularly on the northwest winds that blow following the passage of a cold front. Over the years, I have observed fourteen raptor species from Azure’s peak, including Golden Eagles which are mid-to-late fall migrants. While on the summit in October 2007, an immature Golden Eagle suddenly appeared at eye level as it lazily rode a thermal up the southern cliff wall. It soared over me, and then headed on a direct line southeast toward the High Peaks. On this same outing, two American Pipits made a stop on the rocky summit during their trip south from the tundra.

Avian life on Azure is exciting year-round and there are always wonderful surprises on the journey.

—Joan Collins



Accountant Needed

NNYA is in need of an experience accountant to help with the filing of several tax related documents and to evaluate our system of keeping and maintaining records, reconciling income and disbursements, etc. If you think you could help contact Treasurer Amy Freiman @ nisseq@aol.com.

The 2010 Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Grant

I feel exhilarated, proud and profoundly optimistic to announce that the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation, despite the ongoing lackluster economic environment, renewed their support for NNYA with a grant of \$10,000 for 2010.

The president of the Cullman Foundation explained to me the nature of their recession-proof generosity: “Mr. & Mrs. Cullman instructed the Directors of this foundation to distribute nine percent of its endowment annually, which is above-and-beyond the five percent mandated by the IRS. While many foundations have cut back their grant-making during the 2008 and 2009 economic downturn, the Cullman’s foresight and generosity has allowed us to continue our ongoing support of deserving organizations, such as yours, during these challenging times.”

A board member hand wrote on the letter accompanying the check: “Keep up the great work!”

The grant represents a mandate for NNYA to continue our work in Adirondack conservation, education and research.

This refunding amounts to a major vote of confidence in NNYA’s ability to identify crucial conservation initiatives at the grass roots level, where we interact and partner with organizations as diverse as the Adirondack Visitor Interpretive Centers in Paul Smiths and Newcomb, The Wildlife Conservation Society, The Wild Center, The Adirondack Loon Project, The Nature Conservancy, The New York Department of Environmental Conservation, The American Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators, Saranac Middle School and Elizabethtown/Lewis Central School district.

NNYA shares with the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation an ardent desire to preserve, promote and protect the Adirondacks through on the ground, real time, conservation, education and research.

The NNYA Board of Directors administers this grant on a completely volunteer basis—no meals, no junkets, no reimbursed expenses.

For grant applications contact: Amy Freiman @ nisseq@aol.com, or visit the NNYA web site: www.nnya.org.

—John Thaxton

Editor's Note

Staring at a luminous wall of sea smoke and clouds, in one-degree air with a light but bone-chilling wind, we heard the liquid hiss of a small flock of something small invisibly splash-landing in the curling mist as a staccato chorus of quacking mallard hens and a few plaintive Canada goose honks introduced a lone yodeling herring gull and another two splash-landing small flocks of something in rapid succession. That we couldn't see any birds didn't bother me so much because after ten minutes of futile squinting I needed immediately to switch from my gloves to a friend's pair of humongous snow mobile mittens, with which I couldn't have focused my binoculars even if Archaeopteryx him- or herself had waddled laboriously up the boat launch ramp out of the mist.

By 3:00 p.m. the temperature had risen to five degrees and we rushed home to phone or email in the results of our efforts at doing the New York side of the Ferrisburgh Christmas Count, only to stop dead in our tracks at the sight of a FedEx envelope lying anti-inconspicuously on the "Welcome" mat before our front door. I heard my lips click in a smile, Pat's too, and we smiled at anchor for awhile—thrilled, humbled, hopeful and happy. We knew the oversized envelope contained the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation 2010 grant. Every member of NNYA, as well as the individuals and organizations it has helped support, should feel a frisson of joy and pride at this recognition of the value of our work. Read inside how Mr. & Mrs. Cullman had the vision to mandate that their conservation foundation continue its level of support despite stunning recessionary pressures.

Check out as well the incredible roster of field trips scheduled for this spring, from tried and true forays to such favorite places as Ausable Marsh and Massawepie Mire to a completely new journey to the Pharoah Ponds Wilderness Area. Attendance at our field trips, as well as our programs, has risen considerably, and it feels very gratifying to report that I hear increasingly positive feedback from members and non-members alike.

As usual, I devoted significant space to the results of the 2009 Christmas Bird Counts, three of which Pat and I participated in, which made for an avianly fascinating CBC season. After the phantom splash-landings in the mist, we found a redhead duck on the Ferrisburgh CBC, and while doing the Saranac Lake CBC I saw a ruby-crowned kinglet, which Pat, ever the objective, skeptical scientist grilled me about, finally relenting when I said I felt certain. Sure enough, at the bar before dinner, board of directors member Mary O'Dell, when I asked if she had any good birds, said, surprised, "I had a ruby-crowned kinglet."

I feel extremely pleased to feature in this issue the photography of Mark Bowie, one of the truly great Adirondack artists. His senses of color and form and mood and atmosphere speak for themselves. You can see more of his work at www.markbowie.com.

—John Thaxton
