

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 40 Number 1

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Two-Time Joseph & Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Grant Recipient Co-authors NYS-DEC Recovery Plan for New York State Populations of the Spruce Grouse



Angelina Ross, NNYA board member and NYS DEC wildlife specialist, who twice received NNYA/Joseph & Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation research grants to study spruce grouse, co-authored, with Dr. Glenn Johnson, also on the NNYA board, the NYS DEC's Spruce Grouse Recovery Plan, a more than sixty page document with recommendations designed to prevent the extirpation of this very threatened species from the Adirondacks.

The plan provides an excellent overview of the pressures on spruce grouse populations in New York, in particular severe habitat loss and fragmentation, and proposes habitat management and the introduction of additional spruce grouse, probably from Canada. The plan involves analyzing the DNA of spruce grouse captured outside the Adirondacks, introducing DNA compatible birds, preparing population viability analyses and monitoring reproductive success for twenty-five years.

A bold and elaborate plan indeed, The Spruce Grouse Recovery Plan could potentially save a species that many birders, myself included, feel certain will disappear from the Adirondacks unless the DEC funds and implements a bold and ambitious program to enhance spruce grouse populations and habitats.

Some excerpts from Angie's and Glenn's plan:

"Recovery Criteria: As determined by a population viability analysis (PVA) by A. Ross (unpublished data), the spruce grouse will be considered recovered to the point where they may be downlisted to Threatened in New York when there are (1) at least two subpopulations or sites where habitat manipulations have taken place that result in at least a 13% increase in adult and chick survivorship from current estimates (increase in adult survivorship from 55.0% to 61.5%), and (2) after successful reintroduction of 30 individuals into each of two additional sites formerly occupied by spruce grouse that results in establishment of breeding populations...."

The spruce grouse will be considered fully recovered in New York when there exists for at least 25 years a minimum of (1) 15 breeding subpopulations with an average adult and chick annual mortality of less than 45.0 (+23 SD)% and (2) two additional subpopulations with an average adult and chick mortality of less than 38.5 (+17)%, and (3) 90% of females breeding with an average clutch size of 5.6 (+1.3) hatchlings per female. Periodic effective habitat management may be necessary to sustain these subpopulations and a follow-up PVA can be used to select sites where effective habitat manipulations should take place.

Several potential sites have been identified."

—JT

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"Like" us on Facebook for reminders of upcoming NNYA events and other Info.



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NNYA

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Northern New York Audubon, Inc.

A chapter of National Audubon Society
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Saturday, March 3, 2012 Sage Trail Snowshoe Newcomb, NY

Time: 9 a.m.

Meet: At the Adirondack Interpretive Center, 5922 State Rt. 28N Newcomb, NY

Leader: Charlotte Demers

Bring: Appropriate layers of apparel and water

No registration required. For more information, visit the AIC website at:

www.esf.edu/aic (518) 582-2000; or contact Charlotte at: cdemers@frontiernet.net

Description: Depending on the snow cover, we will snowshoe or hike out to the R. W. Sage Jr. Memorial Trail. The Sage Trail is a loop trail that crosses the Rich Lake Outlet. The trail leads along the lakeshore, and through river, forest, and wetland ecosystems. We'll enjoy an easy walk along Belden Pond through a mixed wood forest that often harbors woodpeckers, creepers. We'll keep an ear and eye out for the white-winged crossbills that have been seen in the softwoods around the AIC building. Plan on 2-2.5 hours of easy snowshoeing.

Saturday, April 7, 2012 Huntington Wildlife Forest Newcomb, NY

Time: 9 a.m.

Meet: At the Adirondack Interpretive Center, 5922 State Rt. 28N Newcomb, NY

Leader: Charlotte Demers

Bring: Appropriate layers of apparel and water

No registration required. For more information, visit the AIC website at:

www.esf.edu/aic or call (518) 582-2000; or contact Charlotte at cde-mers@frontiernet.net

Description: We'll start by seeing what visitors the AIC bird feeders have before we start our 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.

President's Message

I'm sure I am echoing what many of you have been thinking—what a crazy winter! The lack of cold temperatures and snow have been a mixed bag for both people and wildlife. I'm not alone in wishing we had more snow for skiing, sledding and other winter sports although some of you were likely satisfied and relieved to see a mild winter. The winter season brought some interesting avian visitors to our region from the snowy owls observed all throughout our region to the tundra swans on Lake Champlain. Some birds have even made a very early return North despite the advice of Puxatawney Phil. The feeder birds, at least at my feeder, are drastically different than a year ago—2011 was the year of the Common Redpoll; this winter it is American Goldfinches, Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks. The differences we observe from season to season and year to year while extremely interesting, can also be important and revealing. Consider participating in Project Feeder Watch or keeping track of your bird observations on ebird. This is a great and easy way to help scientists understand the relationships between bird populations, climate, food resources, habitat and other environmental factors.

The Board of Directors will soon be disbursing both NNYA and Joan and Joseph Cullman Foundation grant awards. It is always uplifting to review the excellent applications we receive from individuals and organizations looking to enhance our understanding of the natural world through education and research. These projects always make me proud of what this organization is able to accomplish. And speaking of the board - we are looking for new Board members. If you are interested, have questions about the responsibilities or know someone who you think would be a good addition to our Board, please contact me.

—Charlotte Demers

Saturday, April 28, 2012 Ausable Marsh

Join Pat and John Thaxton for a morning of birding at one of the most productive birding spots in the Adirondacks. With a river, a marsh and Lake Champlain shoreline, and habitats ranging from pine woods to mixed woods, Ausable Marsh hosts a stunning variety of breeding and migratory birds, from warblers and bitterns to wood ducks and scaup. We'll look along the banks of the Ausable river for warblers and vireos, and scan the marsh and the lake for waterfowl.

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Leaders: Pat & John Thaxton

Meet: Entrance to main parking, north end.

Registration: Call Pat & John: (518) 576-4232 or email: jpthax5317@gmail.com

Saturday, April 28th, 2012 Paul Smith's College VIC Paul Smiths, NY

Time: 8:30-11:30

Leader: Brian McCallister

Register: Call Brian at (518) 637-1773 or email: birder64@yahoo.com

Bring: Binoculars, guides, snack and good boots.

Description: Join Brian for a gentle walk through some of the varied habitats at the 3,000 acre VIC. Migratory raptors, early warblers, resting waterfowl and early-arrival vireos are all possibilities.

Saturday, May 5, 2012 Roosevelt Truck Trail Newcomb, NY

Time: 9 a.m.

Meet: At the Adirondack Interpretive Center, 5922 State Rt. 28N Newcomb, NY

Leader: Charlotte Demers

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

No registration required. For more information, visit the AIC website at: www.esf.edu/aic or call (518) 582-2000; or contact Charlotte at cdemers@frontiernet.net

Description: After meeting at the AIC and checking out the great feeder birds, we will head east on Route 28N to the Roosevelt truck trail. This is a lovely grass and moss covered road that connects Blue Ridge Road and 28N. The trail has some brook crossings, passes through a spruce plantation, white pine forest and some young hardwoods as it goes up and down between ridges. Boreal species have been seen in the conifer sites along the trail. The trail is hilly but easy and maybe damp so appropriate footwear is recommended. Plan on 2-3 hours of easy to moderate hiking.

Sunday, April 1, 2012, 10 a.m. NNYA Board Meeting The Wild Center Tupper Lake, NY

Saturday, May 12, 2012 Pharaoh Lakes Wilderness

Leaders: Glen and Malinda Chapman

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(87). This spot is also 0.2 miles west of the entrance to Paradox Lake Campsite.

Register: Please contact us in Ticonderoga at 518-585-9810 or chapamini@aol.com to confirm.

Description: Glen and Malinda will lead an early morning bird walk in the Pharaoh Lakes Wilderness area on Saturday May 12, 2012. We'll follow the gentle Long Swing Trail through a variety of habitats - under huge pine forests and along wetlands towards Crane Pond. Many species of warblers and wildflowers await!

Saturday, May 19, 2012 Hulls Falls Road Keene Valley, NY

Description: The annual Hurricane ADK/Northern New York Audubon bird walk with Ruth Kuhfahl and leaders, Pat and John Thaxton, will meet at the Keene Valley end of Hulls Falls Road. No need to register—just come. We have always had sightings of an interesting variety of species. On a previous year's May walk in this diverse habitat we found nesting Pine warblers, Solitary sandpiper and Bay-breasted warbler.

Time: 7:30 a.m.

Leaders: Ruth Kuhfahl, Pat & John Thaxton

Meet: Hulls Falls Road @ Marcy Field

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

Save the Dates Great Adirondack Birding Celebration June 1st-3rd www.adkvic.org/birdcelebration.html Hamilton County Birding Festival June 8th-10th www.adirondackexperience.com

Crown Point Bird Banding Station

Friday May 4th-Sunday May 20th, 2012

The Station will set-up on Friday, May 4th and will be in full operation beginning Saturday, May 5th. The last full day of operation will be Sunday, May 20th. The Station will pack up and leave on Monday, May 21st. Normally we would leave on the Sunday. However, the celebration of the reopening of the Champlain Bridge is taking place that weekend.

Here is a website about the celebration:

<http://champlainbridgecommunity.org>

Mountain Birdwatch Wants You

Love birding? Love hiking the mountains of the Northeast? Join Mountain Birdwatch, an international conservation effort to monitor high-elevation breeding birds in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and eastern Canada! Mountain Birdwatch seeks enthusiastic hikers and birders to adopt a mountain route and monitor breeding songbirds. Volunteers survey eleven high-elevation species, including the rare and vulnerable Bicknell's Thrush. Each volunteer adopts one route to survey; surveys can be conducted on any morning in June, but monitors should be flexible enough to schedule around bad weather. Surveys begin 45 minutes before sunrise and last 2-4.5 hours, depending on the length of the route. Overnight camping is required for most routes; some routes require a 4WD vehicle for road access. The goal of Mountain Birdwatch is to monitor the status, distribution, and habitat requirements of high-elevation songbirds. Results are used to identify habitat conservation priorities and assess impacts of proposed development and climate change.

Sound like a good fit for you? Visit our website: <http://www.vtecostudies.org/MBW/index.html> for more information; and see available routes: <http://www.vtecostudies.org/MBW/availableroutes.html> in your region! Contact Mountain Birdwatch director Judith Scarl at jscarl@vtecostudies.org to sign up for a route or to ask questions about this exciting program!

Attention 11- to 17-Year Olds

Attend a DEC Summer Camp for Free

Northern New York Audubon seeks to sponsor a teen 11 to 17 years of age for a week at the DEC's Camp Colby in Saranac Lake or Camp Pack Forest in Warrensburg.

In addition to ecology workshops and field study in various habitats, campers may enjoy canoeing, swimming, hiking, or hunter safety, games, and other optional activities such as archery and fishing. Full information is available at: www.dec.state.ny.us/website/education/edcamps/html

For a great time enjoying the outdoors and learning about nature and the environment, send us a paragraph about why you would like to go to camp. Include your name, address, age, and phone number. You may send it online or to NNYA Scholarship, 585 Pink School Road, Canton, NY 13617. The deadline for applications is March 7th. Good luck!

For more information about the contest contact: Brian McCallister at (518) 637-1773, (e-mail: birder64@yahoo.com) or Eileen Wheeler at (315) 386-2482, (e-mail: eiwheeler@yahoo.com).

Short-Eared Owl Irruption

This December birders saw as many as ten short-eared owls at a time in Essex. On the Ferrisburgh CBC we saw six at once under conditions too dark for a photo, so I made this painting of a juvenile short-eared.

—JT



The Vernal Paradox

Doubtless because I have a reputation as a gonzo bird nerd so far gone that he uses the top of the binoculars around his neck as a platform for taking field notes, people continually materialize out of the blue, and increasingly out of crackling cellular networks, to tell me about their bird sightings. They stop me on the street, in supermarket aisles, in restaurants, at the top of steep downhill cross-country ski trails, in the dentist's office, in parking lots rife with people in a hurry backing up.

They either come from the "I saw this bird I can't identify school" or know very well what they saw and would like me to comment on the relative novelty of the sighting, particularly when it strikes them as unusual at a particular time of year. For reasons I can't fathom, these queries come with a certain regularity, once every two to four weeks I'd guess, but this winter the frequency of questions about birds escalated big time, with, on several occasions, multiple queries per day.

I must have received a dozen phone calls this winter about stunning numbers of robins showing up everywhere, like invading armies, and as many people stopped me here and there to note all the robins. The Ferrisburgh Christmas Bird Count tallied thirty-eight hundred forty-nine robins, which blew the previous record right out of the water.

I found myself repeating, again and again, that the robin is not, in my opinion, the harbinger of spring, explaining that you can always find them in the Champlain Valley, even during wickedly cold winters. After disabusing my interlocutors about robins, I note that, in my opinion, turkey vultures rank as the true harbingers of spring.

So last week, early February, a woman who works in the supermarket pulled me aside and said she saw two common grackles in Lewis, which made me think of a friend who saw a red-winged blackbird in a marsh near me in late January. Then I happened to see three hundred or so snow buntings in the plowed fields of Essex and discovered, looking at some photos I took of them flying back and forth, that the males were in breeding plumage and probably heading north., which made me wonder if perhaps some of those rough-legged hawks in the valley, twice as many as usual, came from wintering ranges farther south and were, now, heading north to their breeding grounds.

Then I saw a post on Northern New York Birds about a hermit thrush that collided with a window at The Wild Center—the staff reported that the bird looked healthy, which suggests, to me, it probably crashed to its death while migrating north, never mind the mid-February date.

Late this past Sunday night, February 19th, I checked emails and saw a post from Jeff Boslinger, the Birdman of Fort Drum, and while reporting on the fourteen yellow-rumped warblers he says overwintered in St. Lawrence County he noted that he saw "a very early turkey vulture."

As I sat there, somewhat dumbfounded, staring at the computer screen, I wondered if I should perhaps do a study correlating how many days I can't go skiing during a winter with how many days earlier migrating birds return to breed in the Adirondacks.

Perhaps I could even get a grant...

—JT

The 2012 Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Grant

I feel downright giddily happy to announce that the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation renewed their support of NNYA with a grant of \$10,000 for 2012.

This 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 Interpretative Center in Paul Smiths and the Adirondack Interpretative Center in Newcomb, the Wildlife Conservation Society, The Wild Center, The Adirondack Loon Project, The Nature Conservancy, The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, The American Association of Wildlife Rehabilitators, Saranac Middle School and Elizabethtown/Lewis Central School District, SUNY ESF and SUNY Potsdam.

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.

Deadlines for Grant Applications

Northern New York Audubon (NNYA) is now accepting applications for the 2012/2013 NNYA and Joseph and Joan Cullman Grants. Projects that support the conservation ideals of NNYA, either through research or education, are eligible for this grant. Eligibility includes, but is not limited to, environmental organizations, teachers, graduate students, and research project managers. The Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Grants (JJCCFG) are made possible by a generous donation from the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation, Inc.

Application procedures and forms can be downloaded from the Northern New York Audubon web site here - <http://nnya.org/conservation/cullman/>

The email deadline is March 23, 2012; the USPS deadline is March 21, 2012.

Check Facebook for additional field trips that may get scheduled after this newsletter goes to press.

2011 Christmas Bird Counts Elizabethtown CBC

Elizabethtown NY – 44° 13' N 73° 36' W centered at Essex County courthouse. The 2011 count was held on Sunday December 18 from 6:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Twenty observers participated in the count for a total of 60.3 party-hours, covering 14.7 miles on foot and 315.10 miles by car. Weather was beautiful with temperatures ranging from 0° F in the morning and warming to 23° F by the afternoon. It was clear and mostly calm for the duration of the count. Snow cover ranged from 0" in the valley up to 3" in the woods and on the trail to Hurricane. Still water was frozen while moving water was partly open. No precipitation occurred on count day.

Graylag Goose 3, **Snow Goose 7450**, Mallard 16, Ruffed Grouse 16, Wild Turkey 22, **Great Blue Heron 1**, Cooper's Hawk 1, Red-tailed Hawk 11, Rough-legged Hawk 4, Rock Pigeon 173, Mourning Dove 89, Barred Owl 1, Northern Saw-whet Owl 1, Downy Woodpecker 10, Hairy Woodpecker 14, Pileated Woodpecker 5, Northern Shrike 1, Blue Jay 110, American Crow 137, Common Raven 20, Black-capped Chickadee 250, Boreal Chickadee 2, Tufted Titmouse 5, Red-breasted Nuthatch 31, White-breasted Nuthatch 12, Brown Creeper 8, Golden-crowned Kinglet 38, Eastern Bluebird 16, American Robin 100, European Starling 158, Cedar Waxwing 28, American Tree Sparrow 60, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco 56, Northern Cardinal 6, Purple Finch 12, White-winged Crossbill 2, Pine Siskin 42, American Goldfinch 204, House Sparrow 14.

Totals: 39 species and 9131 individuals

Participants: Becky Bosley, Robin Brown, Joan Collins, Charlotte Demers, Beth Edmonds, Kaitlin Fielder, Denise Griffin, Fuat Latiff, Kathleen LoGuidice, Megan Murphy, Dan Nickerson, Stan Oliva, Tom Phillips, Carole Slatkin, Hank Stebbins, Eric Teed, John Thaxton, Pat Thaxton, Eve Ticknor, and Yvette Tillema.

—Charlotte Demers

Ferrisburgh CBC

A stiff north wind blew throughout the 52nd **Ferrisburgh Christmas Bird Count** held December 17, 2011. The wintry conditions provided a stark contrast to the up-to-then very mild winter. As a result we had a mixture of migrating waterfowl and lingering landbirds that usually would have migrated. On the other hand, the persistent wind made it difficult to coax birds from the brush. Forty-five field observers and five feeder watchers spent the day tallying birds and identified 81 species. An additional two species (black scoter and gadwall) were found during the count week period. Large flocks of migrating geese complicated determination of actual numbers of birds as surely some flocks were counted by multiple observers. In the end I arbitrarily assumed 1/3 of both Canada and snow geese had been double counted. With this assumption, observers tallied 51,166 birds, the most birds recorded in the history of the count. Our ten-year average is 79 species and 20,376 birds.

Common Loon 47, Red-throated Loon 2, Horned Grebe 20, Great Blue Heron 8, Cackling Goose 3, Canada Goose 10453, Greater White-fronted Goose 2, Snow goose 21966, Mallard 298, American Black duck 166, Green-winged Teal 3, American Wigeon 1, Wood Duck 1, Gadwall CP, Greater Scaup 36, Lesser Scaup 26, Common Goldeneye 658, Bufflehead 75, Long-tailed Duck 5, White-winged Scoter 27, Surf Scoter 1, Black Scoter CP, Hooded Merganser 16, Common merganser 68, Red-breasted Merganser 14, Sharp-shinned Hawk 1, Cooper's Hawk 5, Red tailed hawk 62, Rough-legged Hawk 16, Bald Eagle 16, Northern Harrier 28, Peregrine Falcon 1, Merlin 1, American Kestrel 1, Ruffed grouse 2, Pheasant 2, Turkey 65, Great Black-backed Gull 31, Herring Gull 57, Ring-billed Gull 2100, Bonaparte's Gull 42, Rock Pigeon 711, Mourning dove 211, Eastern Screech Owl 2, Great Horned Owl 2, Short eared owl 6, Northern Flicker 11, Pileated Woodpecker 8, Red-bellied Woodpecker 16, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker 1, Hairy Woodpecker 42, Downy Woodpecker 71, Horned Lark 13, Blue Jay 146, Common Raven 67, American Crow 1128, Black-capped Chickadee 639, Tufted Titmouse 109, White-breasted Nuthatch 103, Red-breasted Nuthatch 9, Brown creeper 10, Carolina Wren 2, American Robin 3849, Hermit Thrush 1, Eastern Bluebird 82, Golden Crowned Kinglet 15, Cedar Waxwing 288, Northern Shrike 1, European Starling 5137, Yellow-rumped Warbler 7, House Sparrow 847, Red-winged Blackbird 1, Brown-headed Cowbird 2, Northern Cardinal 90, Evening Grosbeak 1, Purple Finch 6, House Finch 194, American Goldfinch 443, Dark-eyed Junco 252, American Tree Sparrow 218, White-throated Sparrow 13, Song sparrow 4, Snow bunting 84.

Total Species: 81; Total Individuals: 51,166.

—Mike Winslow

Plattsburgh CBC

2011 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 2011 count was held on Sunday, December 18, 2011 from 7:15 to 16:30 with temperatures ranging from 7°- 21° F under clear skies. The day was calm with very little wind. Afternoon north breezes reached between 1- 5mph. 33 field workers logged 75.75 party hours and a total of 451.75 miles of which 17.25 miles and 18.75 hours were on foot and 2 by non-motorized craft to Valcour Island. The 13 feeder watchers spent 17.75 hours at feeders. There were 58 species recorded and 12140 individuals. An additional 4 species were found during count week.

Snow Goose 1581, Cackling Goose cw, Canada Goose 1577, Swan sp. 3, American Black Duck 28, Mallard 613, Canvas-back cw, Lesser Scaup 2, Scaup sp 29, White-winged Scoter 1, Long-tailed Duck 5, Bufflehead 3, Common Goldeneye 515, Hooded Merganser 11, Common Merganser 140, Ruffed Grouse 2, Wild Turkey 5, Common Loon 14, Horned Grebe 39, Red-necked Grebe 1, Great Blue Heron 4, Northern Harrier cw, Sharp-shinned Hawk 2, Cooper's Hawk cw, Red-tailed Hawk 5, Merlin 1, Ring-billed Gull 581, Herring Gull

11, Great-blackbacked Gull 18, Gull sp. 59, Rock Pigeon 391, Mourning Dove 298, Belted Kingfisher 1, Downy Woodpecker 43, Hairy Woodpecker 28, Northern Flicker 1, Pileated Woodpecker 11, Blue Jay 133, American Crow 2126, Common Raven 5, Black-capped Chickadee 549, Tufted Titmouse 24, Red-breasted Nuthatch 1, White-breasted Nuthatch 52, Brown Creeper 11, Wren 1, Eastern Bluebird 18, American Robin 601, Northern Mockingbird 31, European Starling 1852, Cedar Waxwing 8, Yellow-rumped Warbler 1, American Tree Sparrow 56, Song Sparrow 3, White-throated Sparrow 2, Dark-eyed Junco 176, Snow Bunting 34, Northern Cardinal 51, Purple Finch 1, House Finch 63, American Goldfinch 351, House Sparrow 83.

The participants were Derek Allan, Cindy Allen, Alan Belford, Helen Booth, Bob Booth, John Brown, Gwen Cateenwalla, Jim Cayea, Joy Cayea, Julie Dumas, Keitha Farney, Cornelia Forrence, Melissa Hart, Judith Heintz, Euclid Jones, Joanne Kennedy, Harold Klein, Bill Krueger, Linda LaPan, Julie Lattrell, Bobbi Levesque, Chris Martine, Isabelle Martine, Jackson Martine, Melanie McCormack, Brian McAllister, Janet Mihuc, Bonnie Myers, Jack Myers, Nancy Olsen, Paul Osenbaugh, Helle Parker, Carol Pinney, Inge Sapp, Douglas Skoop, Willian Stahl, Mary Roden-Tice, Ingeborg Sapp, Michelle Snyder, Gary Sturgis, Irma Teittinen, Saana Teittinen-Gordon, Bill Teter, Nora Teter, Lynn Valenti, Dan Vogt, Ann Wilke

—Judy Heintz

Saranac Lake CBC

The weather cooperated for the 56th annual Saranac Lake Christmas Bird Count on New Year's Day with warm temperatures, calm winds, and sunny skies in the afternoon. The rivers had opened up and some of the lakes had partially re-opened (e.g., Lake Placid). Not all reports are yet in, but the species total (44 or 45) was either the second or fourth highest ever thanks to a bunch of talented and dedicated observers. High counts were tied for six species and broken for three species, and a new species (#97) was observed—an immature Golden Eagle migrating south! Other raptors, uncommonly reported in this count circle, were a Cooper's Hawk (5th record) and a Red-tailed Hawk (7th record). The plentiful cone crop (fir, spruces, hemlock, tamarack) led to a multitude of Red Squirrels and winter finches (1,548) - Goldfinches, Siskins, Purple Finches, and White-winged Crossbills, although the latter were only observed in Bloomingdale Bog. Bloomingdale Bog also hosted a Black-backed Woodpecker, 15 Boreal Chickadees, and 26 Gray Jays (a record). Another Black-backed Woodpecker was observed at Intervale Lowlands outside of Lake Placid, where they have also nested. The open water led to a nice variety of late river and riverside birds along the Saranac River - 2 Bald Eagles, 3 Belted Kingfishers, 2 Great Blue Herons, 1 Canada Goose, 2 Common Goldeneyes, and 2 Common Mergansers, in addition to the usual Hooded Mergansers, Mallards, and Black Ducks. As usual, over a thousand Black-capped Chickadees were recorded. Given how little of the count circle is readily accessible, it is staggering to think how many chickadees Lake Placid

actually inhabit the count circle. One interesting note is that the numbers of both Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers were low, with Downys at their lowest level since 1987 and Hairys at their lowest level in a decade.

While casually listening to an owl tape while waiting for another participant to join them, two observers were startled to see a Great-horned Owl fly over the moon-roof of their car and start vocalizing from a nearby stub. The bird had apparently heard the tape through the closed windows of the car and came looking for the intruder in its territory. This is only the second time in 56 years that Great-horned Owl has been reported on the count! (Barred Owls are the only common winter owl in the area.)

Thanks to all who participated.

—Larry Master

Poetry Corner

I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, or golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company;
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

—William Wordsworth



Editor's Note

Not knowing whether to blame it on Global Warming, Mortgage-Backed Securities or the Post-Fluoridation Tooth Fairy, and after getting turned away by a Texas Ranger in May from Palo Duro Canyon because of an out-of-control wildfire, and then in August getting turned away by a New York State Trooper from going into Keene because of catastrophic flooding, I began to feel the ineluctable motion of a journey to Hell in a hand basket, with the prophet Jeremiah at the wheel, Newt Gingrich and Mitt Romney duking it out in the back seat and Rick Santorum sitting on the dashboard sermonizing about the evils of sensuality (his phrase) while the CD player, set on repeat, kept reprising the chorus of "Bye-bye Miss American Pie."

Despite the frighteningly warm winter, complete with lots of rain in January and February, I began to worry that I didn't have enough wood to last me until spring, so I called my wood guy who told me in twenty-five thousand words or more that he didn't have any but a supplier did but couldn't come to my place because he delivers with a trailer that wouldn't make it up my drive but he'd try to go get some on my behalf and if he couldn't he'd call within a half hour. I breathed a sigh of relief only to cringe twenty-five minutes later when the phone rang. As I went to answer it I started doing a mental inventory of the dead standing trees on my property and an estimate of the chances of my chainsaw starting after a caesura of three years, and when I picked up the phone and heard a voice I couldn't identify I experienced complete mental bankruptcy.

"Hi, John? Kevin from Fed-Ex any way I can make it up your driveway I got a letter you have to sign for?"

It took me a full thirty seconds to respond because my lips went from a scrunched-up scowl to an ear-ear-grin because the only other five times before that day Fed-Ex delivered anything to my house they delivered a check for a Joseph & Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Grant.

I'm still smiling ear-to-ear, as should every member of NNYA, about getting another Cullman grant, a stunning affirmation of the value of our work in Adirondack conservation and education. Even before I got the grant I wrote this issue's cover article about a two-time recipient of a Cullman grant co-authoring the *NYS-DEC Recovery Plan for New York State Populations of the Spruce Grouse* (<ftp://ftp.dec.state.ny.us/dfwmr/wildlife/spgr/SPGRplan.pdf>). The Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Grants have enabled NNYA to identify and support important scientific studies that have enhanced, and will continue to enhance, our understanding of vital Adirondack ecological issues.

I devoted quite a bit of space to the slew of field trips scheduled for this spring, and to the results of the four Christmas Bird Counts in our area, which continue to baffle and amaze me—on the Elizabethtown CBC we not only had a snow goose for the first time in forty-five years but had 7,450 of them. On the Ferrisburgh CBC I stood slack-jawed among seven birders as we watched six very close-by short-eared owls hunting and fighting and calling and, basically, blowing our minds. I felt like an accidental stand-in in a National Geographic Television Special.

Spectacular.

—John Thaxton