

# 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 43 Number 1

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## NNYA Conservation Education Grant (\$2,272)

### Dr. Ezra Schwartzberg, Adirondack Research, Inc. High School Phenology Trail at National Sports Academy, Lake Placid

NNYA underwrote the cost of developing a Phenology Trail on the National Sports Academy (NSA) high school campus and neighboring village park in the town of Lake Placid. A Phenology trail is a physical path that links together a network of plants at which phenology observations are recorded. Phenology refers to the timing of recurring plant and animal life cycle stages, such as spring budbreak, leaf expansion, flowering, insect emergence, or bird migration. The Phenology Trail provides environmental science curricular opportunities for NSA's 65 students in grades 8-12 and PG. NNYA's funding supported the physical development of the trail, including layout and mapping, species selection, and interpretive signage.

The 500 meter trail connects a series of trees, shrubs and perennial flowers that already existed on the NSA campus and neighboring Parkside Drive. Each of the 25 plants along the trail will be labeled with a combination of permanent pedestal signs and engraved metal tree tags. The permanent pedestal signs will consist of one large (17" x 22") and four small (12"x16") High Pressure Laminate (HPL) interpretive signs. The large HPL signs will introduce community members and the Lake Placid visitors to the Phenology Trail projects and will highlight information on high school curricular involvement. The four smaller signs will provide information on focal species being observed and will include such things as species information, "Did you Know?" facts, and a key to the phenophases for that species. Each will list NNYA as the Phenology Trail funding partner.

The National Sports Academy environmental science students will record plant phenophases along the Phenology Trail as part of their environmental science curricula, which incorporates authentic research projects pertaining to the Adirondacks. Much of NSA's curricula are focused on place-based education, and this Phenology Trail will be a natural extension of this existing educational focus. Students will gain familiarity with locally abundant tree species, including white pine, white birch and quaking aspen. The Phenology Trail will be the first educational program at NSA to provide students with the opportunity to work under the direction and in collaboration with a local research scientist. Students will work on all aspects of developing this program, from its design to implementation and reporting.

This Phenology Trail will provide the physical infrastructure for high school students to participate in a national phenology program designed to teach about climate change, link local observations to national climate trends, demonstrate ecological research methods and provide observation data for hypothesis development and data analysis at the high school level. Students will participate through weekly lab exercises by recording phenological observations using smartphone apps developed as part of the Nature's Notebook Program. Additionally, local year-round Lake Placid residents will be able to participate by recording observations of their own using smartphone devices. The ability of students, local residents and visitors to participate in this infrastructure will make this a unique citizen science opportunity. NSA students will begin using this outdoor classroom during spring, 2015.

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**President's Message*****Field Notes from a Modern Falconer***

I began a love affair with raptors during an internship early in my career. While I loved working with all animals, my fate as a card carrying raptor snob was sealed when I held my first Eastern Screech Owl. Through the years I've been lucky to work with amazing species from all taxa. But time and time again I return to these flying predators as a favorite. Who could resist that fierce determination, strength, and beauty?

Three years ago I was able to realize a lifelong dream by becoming a licensed falconer. I'm currently working with an amazing Red Tailed Hawk named Seraphina, or "Phee," for short. Over the past several months we've spent time getting to know and trust one another and now we're a well-oiled machine. She flies from tree to tree searching from above while I meander through the brush and field hoping to flush game. We've doubled our chances of success by working together. And, while at any point she can choose to terminate our working relationship by deciding to go off on her own, so far we have remained a team. The fact that she still chooses to come back to my waiting glove every time is, in my eyes, nothing short of a miracle.

I realized recently that I've been a different sort of birder while out with Phee. Her very presence makes all the little birds come out of their hiding places and fling themselves in her direction with wild abandon. She seems to take it all in stride. Just another day at the office...

**--Leah Valerio**

**Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015**  
**Huntington Wildlife Forest**  
**Newcomb, NY**

**Time:** 8 a.m.**Meet:** At Adirondack Interpretive Center, 5922 St. Rt. 28N, Newcomb, NY**Leader:** Charlotte Demers**Registration:** email: [cdemers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cdemers@frontiernet.net) or call AIC: (518) 582-2000

A beautiful 3 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. We will meet at the Adirondack Interpretive Center at 8:00 a.m. and enjoy a cup of coffee and a pastry while we check out the feeder birds. Then, at 8:30 a.m. we will hit the trail.

**Spring Birds and Potluck**  
**Peru, NY**  
**Sunday, May 17th, 2015**

**Time:** 8am - 11am birding; potluck to follow**Leader:** Dr. Michael Burgess**Meet:** Peru Public Library**Registration:** email Dr. Burgess: [michael.b.burgess@plattsburgh.edu](mailto:michael.b.burgess@plattsburgh.edu)

We'll explore various wetland and terrestrial habitats along the newly completed 2.5 mile Little Ausable River walking trail (<http://www.perutown.com/walking-trail-brochure.pdf>) in search of spring migrants, including waterfowl, raptors, sparrows and warblers. After our walk the Peru Public Library will host a potluck lunch. Please bring a spring inspired dish to share. All ages and birding abilities are encouraged to join us. If you would like to participate, please email Michael B. Burgess.

**May 16th, 2015**  
**Intervale Lowlands Preserve**  
**Lake Placid, NY**  
**Presentation**

**Time:** 3:00 p.m. Saturday, May 16th

**Meet:** Intervale Lowlands Preserve—for directions go to: [intervalelowlands.org/30-2/directions-visitation/](http://intervalelowlands.org/30-2/directions-visitation/) Park near red Guest House and walk to main residence

**Leader:** Larry Master

**Registration:** email: [lawrencemaster@gmail.com](mailto:lawrencemaster@gmail.com) or call: (518) 645-1545

Intervale's 135 acres and 700 feet of frontage on the West Branch of the Ausable River was purchased by Larry and Nancy Master six years ago. Since their purchase the property has been protected through a conservation easement, some of the fields and wetlands have been restored, and an intensive monitoring program has begun in conjunction with staff of the Wildlife Conservation Society and Adirondack Research. The preserve is private but birders, naturalists, and scientists are encouraged to visit with permission.

Over 170 species have been observed on the property in the past five years, including 109 species the third week in May. Thus, seeing more than 100 species is quite possible if conditions are favorable. More than 75 bird species nest on the preserve including 17 species of warblers (including Mourning), Black-backed Woodpecker, Lincoln's Sparrow, American Bittern, Hooded and Common Mergansers, and three pairs of Kestrels. On the afternoon of May 16, Larry will give an illustrated presentation about the preserve and the efforts to protect and enhance it for native species and to monitor potential effects of climate change on the native species and ecological communities. He will also discuss the successful construction of a "net zero" LEED Platinum residence and a "net positive" guest house on the property and give a tour of the main residence.

**New NNYA Board Members Needed**

The NNYA Board of Directors needs a few new members in order to fully implement our very varied agenda. The Board meets six times a year and has a significant impact on Adirondack conservation issues.

Please contact Leah Valerio with any suggestions:  
[lvalerio@wildcenter.org](mailto:lvalerio@wildcenter.org)

**Save the Dates:**  
**Great Adirondack Birding Celebration**  
**June 5th-7th**  
**Adirondack Birding Festival**  
**June 12th-14th**



**Saturday, May 16th, 2015**  
**Hulls Falls Road**  
**Keene Valley, NY**

**Time:** 7:30 a.m.

**Leaders:** Ruth Kuhfahl, Pat & John Thaxton

**Meet:** Hulls Falls Road @ Marcy Field

**Registration:** No need to register—just come.

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. We have always had sightings of an interesting variety of species. On a previous year's May walk in this diverse, river-side habitat we found nesting pine warblers, solitary sandpipers and bay-breasted warbler. The walk consists of a leisurely mile –and-a-half to two miles, and several of us will have spotting scopes to bring in birds determined to stay beyond binocular reach.

The trip traditionally attracts quite a few birders, as well as non-birders, and usually breaks up just in time for a slightly late breakfast or a slightly early brunch, both readily available in Keene & Keene Valley

**Field Trip up Mount Arab**  
**Piercefield, St. Lawrence Co.**

**Date:** Saturday, May 16 (rain date May 17)

**Time:** 7 a.m.

**Meeting Location:** Mt. Arab Trailhead

**Leader:** Joan Collins

**Directions:** From the Stewart's Shop in Tupper Lake, proceed about 7 miles west on Route 3 to a left turn on County Route 62/75 (also known as Conifer Road). Drive about 1.7 miles to a left turn onto Mount Arab Road (also known as Eagle Crag Lake Rd.). The trailhead parking is reached in about 8 tenths of a mile.

**To Register:** Email Joan at [Joan.Collins@Frontier.com](mailto:Joan.Collins@Frontier.com) or call (518) 624-5528.

The trail up Mount Arab is a mile long with an elevation gain of ~760 feet. The summit elevation is 2525 feet. Our hike up will be at a relaxed birding pace! From the fire-tower there are beautiful views of Tupper Lake, Mount Morris, the Adirondack High Peaks, the Raquette River Valley, Horseshoe Lake Wild Forest, and many lakes!

On the summit, we will meet up with Thomas Cullen. Thomas spends a great deal of his time as an educator on Mount Arab. He greets climbers and provides nature interpretation to the public. Thomas has a Ruby-throated Hummingbird project on the summit with many feeders, and explains the fascinating relationship between this species and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. Thomas also shares the human history of the Adirondack firetowers. There is also a history display located inside the summit cabin/museum.

If you also plan to attend Larry Master's late afternoon presentation in Lake Placid, we will be off the mountain with plenty of time to spare to make his talk!

## Book Review

### *The Double-Crested Cormorant: Plight of a Feathered Pariah*

Linda R. Wires; illustrations by Barry Kent MacKay

Yale University Press, 2014

368 pages, Hardcover, \$30.00

In Linda Wires' *The Double-Crested Cormorant*, she examines, in great detail, the species' tragic historical relationship with humans and the current management policies in North America. This highly researched book dispels many myths about the Double-Crested Cormorant and offers the first comprehensive assessment of the management policies developed for this species. The beautiful artwork of Barry Kent MacKay graces the pages.

Around for at least 34 million years, the Double-Crested Cormorant has many unique characteristics. Wires includes a section describing the many attributes of the species. Double-Crested Cormorants are powerful swimmers and propel themselves with simultaneous strokes of both feet, making them capable of diving 65 feet down for over a minute. They eat fish from over 60 fish families (mostly forage or "trash" fish). Cormorants are the only colonial waterbirds that nest equally well on the ground or in trees, and they are impressive tree nest builders. Their tendency is to aggregate, but they are monogamous through the breeding season. Cormorants possess a dual feather structure, with the outer feathers wettable (making them less buoyant than other birds), and an inner section that is extremely waterproof with a thin layer of air around the skin that helps reduce heat loss. They have totipalmate feet (all 4 toes joined by webs). Their bills are hooked for grasping and holding fish. Cormorants incubate eggs on the webs of their feet. Their fish catch rate has been recorded to be .6 to 1.4 fish per minute, the highest rate of any marine predator. The Cormorant's amazing underwater performance points to exceptional adaptations that are not yet fully understood. They appear to possess superior visual ability, but can catch fish just as easily in the darkness of the Arctic or in highly turbid waters.

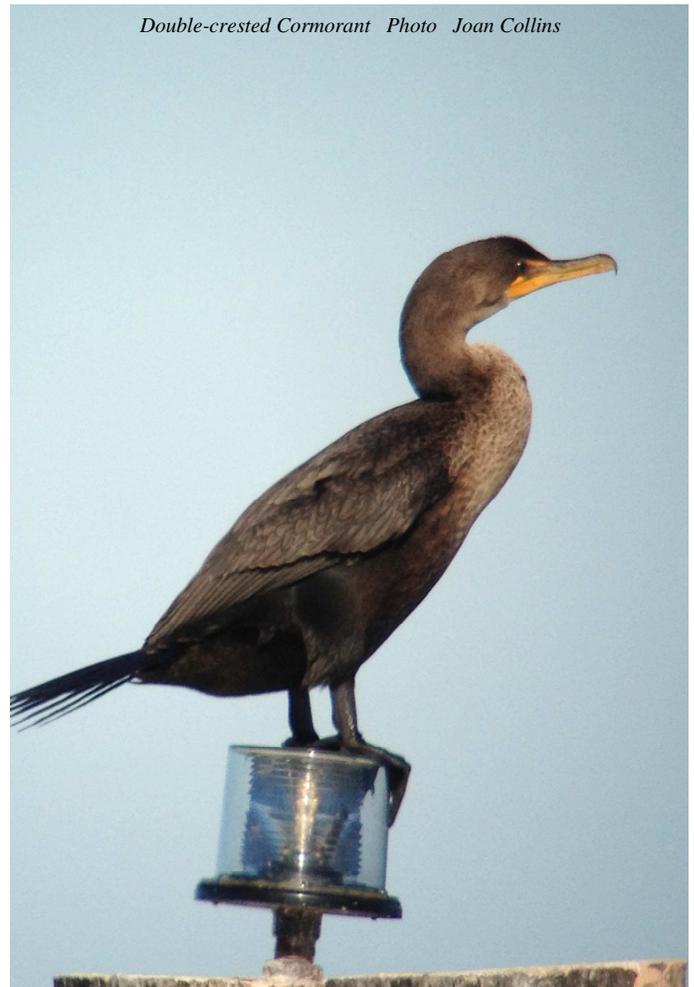
Wires details the origin of this black bird's negative reputation among humans. Aristotle described the cormorant as a "water raven" in his *History of Animals* written in 350 BC. Ravens were considered highly ominous, so the cormorant became the raven's aquatic counterpart. The bird continued to be made into a "pariah" ever since and has been called, ravenous, greedy, gluttonous, unholy, gloomy, voracious, filthy, evil, snakelike in appearance, lacking in self-control, etc. Literary giants like Shakespeare, Chaucer, Coleridge, and Wordsworth have all made references to the cormorant as being gluttonous in nature. In Medieval Europe, black animals were thought to be evil.

The explorers found astonishing numbers of cormorants in North America documented from the early 1600s. In 1820, Audubon described seeing *millions* in Mississippi. In 1891, George Sennett reported seeing a flock of cormorants 4 miles

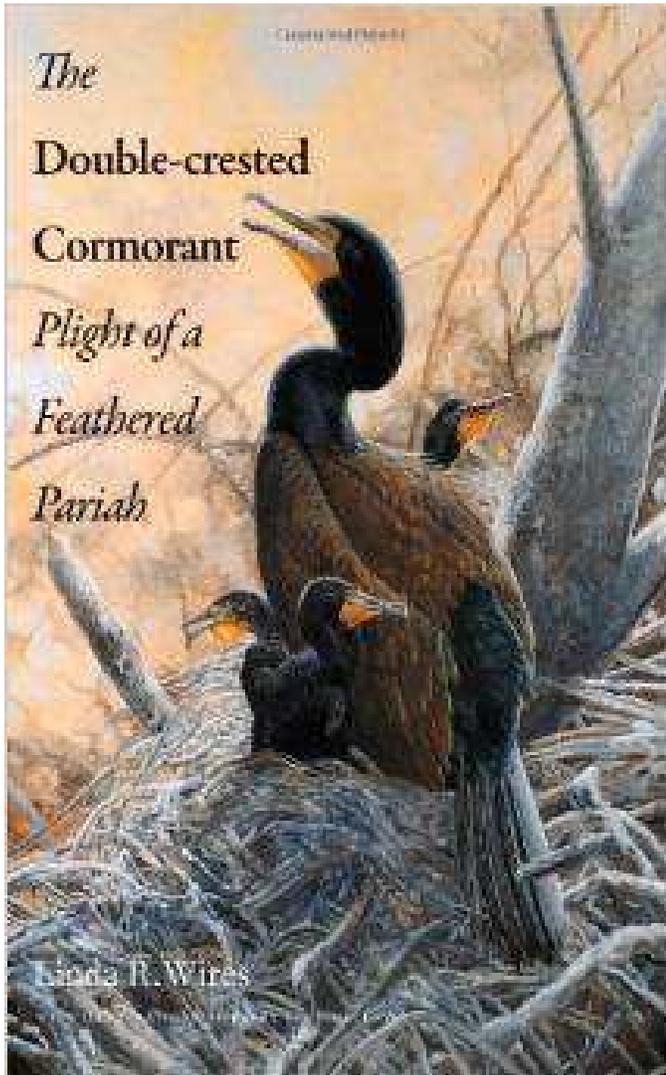
long and a half mile wide in Minnesota. There were many descriptions of cormorants in such numbers that they darkened the skies. But cormorants were easily exploited at nesting colonies for fresh meat, bait for fishing, oil for lamps, trade in plumes and feathers, food for dogs, and eggs. Huge numbers of cormorants were killed.

Double-Crested Cormorants began to recover in the late 1800s – early 1900s as conservation took hold, and protections for birds were put in place. Wires describes that after the hailed conservation success story for the cormorant in the early 1900s, there was an unfortunate reversal of fortune for the birds during the 1950s. In 1951, John Steinbeck wrote that cormorants should be "rightly slaughtered" as colonies of the birds began to reestablish. Persecution began again as public feelings about cormorants once again changed. In addition to human persecution, DDT also took a toll on the species. With the banning of DDT in the U.S. in 1972, and additional protections put in place, cormorants recovered yet again during the 1970s, 80s, and 90s.

Wires gives a comprehensive description of the economic and political landscape of the cormorant over the past 40 to 50 years. Conflicts on the cormorants' winter grounds began as fish farming became an industry with its open ponds, and thousands of reservoirs were created (for water supply, flood control, hydroelectric power, recreation, and fish and wildlife). Instead of constructing ways to keep waterbirds out of the farm ponds, cormorants were singled out as "nuisance" birds in need of "control".



Double-crested Cormorant Photo Joan Collins



In 1998, the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued the “Aquaculture Depredation Order” for Double-crested Cormorants in the Southeastern U.S., the first ever for a fish eating bird. There was a push to expand control to the breeding grounds, which came in 2003 with the second standing depredation order. Feeding areas, roosting sites, and breeding colonies turned into killing fields. Between 1998 and 2011, 500,000 Double-Crested Cormorants have been killed, and untold numbers of nests and eggs destroyed.

Wires describes the slaughter of cormorants as “persecution masquerading as management”. Most of the studies detailing the diet of cormorants appear to show they eat small fish, often invasive species not of commercial interest to humans. There have been no substantial scientific studies to back control of this species. Many of the controls are based on politics not ecology. The cormorant has been wrongly turned into a villain, as Wires states, “a criminal of epic proportion”. When the science of the cormorants’ diet does not support control, the argument to control will often shift to the birds’ destruction of island vegetation. (They nest on less than 1% of the land in the Great Lakes.)

The U.S. and Canadian situations are described as quite different. In Canada, there is no counterpart to the

USDA’s Wildlife Services, and no federal agency to control “nuisance” wildlife. Canada has strong animal support groups and they have done an excellent job of educating the public. There is strong support for cormorants in Canada. In 2004, a documentary of cormorant control was filmed at High Bluff Island by Cormorant Defenders International. The film, “Cormorants in the Great Lakes: Dispelling the Myths” detailed the carnage at the island, showing shot cormorants taking days to die, chicks boiling in the sun, starving, or predated, drowning cormorants, and cormorants starving from injuries. There was a huge public outcry and control has since stopped almost everywhere in Canada. Nova Scotia has never controlled cormorants and teaches the public that the birds are part of the natural system. There are at least six organizations in Canada fighting cormorant control and no counterparts in the U.S.

Of course there are natural limits for Double-Crested Cormorant numbers: “Ashmole’s Halo (1963) – shows that a zone of depleted prey around a colony is a limiting factor regulating the numbers of birds; predation of eggs and young takes a toll; and bacterial, viral, and parasitic infections such as Newcastle Disease will limit numbers.

In 2002 and 2003, the conservation committee of the American Ornithologists’ Union (AOU) gave formal comments on the USFWS’s draft and final environmental impact statements (EIS) for cormorant management. The AOU’s assessment of the EIS was that it was flawed, and they summed up their thoughts with this critical comment, “it appears that what the USFWS plans to do constitutes persecution of a bird species rather than a solution to the real problem of declining fisheries and depredation at aquaculture and hatchery sites.”

Wires clearly shows that cormorant control has been all about social and political dimensions. There is little biological evidence to justify ½ million cormorant deaths as a rational course of action.

Wires writes, “In the end, it is the US Fish and Wildlife Service that has enabled a level of cormorant destruction that may even exceed the persecution the birds experienced in the nineteenth century. With this agency, then, lies responsibility for what has arguably become a modern-day policy of persecution for one of nature’s most magnificent but misunderstood birds. That such a policy could arise at the start of the twenty-first century reveals just how far the United States has yet to go before achieving a resilient ethic of wildlife management, one that includes even those creatures that lie outside the sphere of human acceptance.”

—Joan Collins



## 2014 Christmas Bird Counts Elizabethtown CBC

Elizabethtown NY – 44° 13' N 73° 36' W centered at Essex County courthouse. The 2014 count was held on Sunday December 21 from 5:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Sixteen observers participated in the count for a total of 50.5 party-hours, covering 11.5 miles on foot, 272 miles by car and an additional 2 miles x-country skiing. Temperatures ranged from 12° F to 30° F. Winds were calm throughout the day. Snow cover ranged from 1" in the valley up to 30" on the trail to Hurricane. Still water and moving water was partly open. No precipitation occurred during the count.

Graylag Goose 1, Mallard 28, Ring-necked Pheasant 3, Ruffed Grouse 12, Wild Turkey 43, Red-tailed Hawk 11, Rough-legged Hawk 2, Rock Pigeon 130, Mourning Dove 133, Great-horned Owl 1, Barred Owl 2, **Red-bellied Woodpecker 2 (a first for the Etown count)**, Downy Woodpecker 30, Hairy Woodpecker 29, Pileated Woodpecker 7, Northern Shrike 1, Blue Jay 349, American Crow 71, Common Raven 14, Black-capped Chickadee 384, Tufted Titmouse 6, Red-breasted Nuthatch 19, White-breasted Nuthatch 23, Brown Creeper 5, Golden-crowned Kinglet 12, Eastern Bluebird 11, European Starling 200, American Tree Sparrow 40, Dark-eyed (Slate-colored) Junco 146, Snow Bunting 5, Northern Cardinal 39, Brown-headed Cowbird 1, American Goldfinch 77, Evening Grosbeak 44, House Sparrow 15. Three count week birds were Saw-whet Owl, Belted Kingfisher and Bald Eagle.

**Totals:** 36 species and 1896 individuals. This is just below average for both number of species (38) and number of individuals (2795).

**Participants:** Robin Brown, Charlotte Demers, Denise Griffin, Judy Heintz, Fuat Latif, Megan Murphy, Dan Nickerson, Jim Otto, Emily Selleck, Carole Slatkin, Eric Teed, John Thaxton, Pat Thaxton, Eve Ticknor, Amy Valentine, and Kathleen Wiley

## Ferrisburgh CBC

Here is a summary of the results from the 55<sup>th</sup> Ferrisburgh Christmas Bird Count. We had 47 field participants and 4 feeder-watchers who spent a collective 150 ¼ hours counting birds in our area, with an additional 15 ¾ hours of owl-ging effort. Weather for the count was seasonal with very little wind and no precipitation. Temperatures ranged from the low teens to high twenties through the day, and a base of about 3-8 inches of snow covered the area. The group found 82 species and one hybrid with one additional species found during the count period. The species total is just about the average for this area. There were a total of 13,751 birds counted, the fewest since 2006. We had no large flocks of waterfowl, field birds or robins to up the numbers this year.

**Totals:** common loon, 35; red-throated loon, 2; red-necked grebe, 6; horned grebe, 106; pied-billed grebe, 1; great blue heron, 7; Canada goose, 486; snow goose, 25; mallard, 874; American black duck, 248; black duck/mallard hybrid, 1; northern pintail, 4; gadwall, 1; ring-necked duck, 1; greater scaup, 28; lesser scaup, 3; common goldeneye, 588; bufflehead, 58; hooded merganser, 24; common merganser, 47; red-breasted merganser, 1; sharp-shinned hawk, 4; Cooper's

hawk, 13; red-tailed hawk, 80; rough-legged hawk, 27; bald eagle, 19; northern harrier, 2; American kestrel, 3; merlin, 2; peregrine falcon, 3; ruffed grouse, 1; ring-necked pheasant, 6; wild turkey, 102; great black-backed gull, 29; herring gull, 46; ring-billed gull, 220; rock pigeon, 1230; mourning dove, 596; eastern screech owl, 11; great horned owl, 19; barred owl, 10; short-eared owl, 1; snowy owl, 2; northern saw-whet owl, 1; belted kingfisher, 2; northern flicker, 7; pileated woodpecker, 23; hairy woodpecker, 44; downy woodpecker, 101; red-bellied woodpecker, 40; yellow-bellied sapsucker, 1; red-headed woodpecker, 1; northern shrike, 2; blue jay, 381; common raven, 53; American crow, 581; horned lark, 255; black-capped chickadee, 861; tufted titmouse, 118; white-breasted nuthatch, 165; red-breasted nuthatch, 7; brown creeper, 11; Carolina wren, 10; American robin, 34; northern mockingbird, 1 (count period); eastern bluebird, 124; ruby-crowned kinglet, 1; European starling, 3181; cedar waxwing, 5; northern cardinal, 280; dark-eyed junco, 545; American tree sparrow, 281; white-crowned sparrow, 1; Savannah sparrow, 7; white-throated sparrow, 9; song sparrow, 28; Lapland longspur, 3; snow bunting, 301; red-winged blackbird, 5; brown-headed cowbird, 1; house finch, 152; common redpoll, 2; American goldfinch, 301; house sparrow, 847.

**Totals:** 82 species, 1 count period, 1 hybrid, 13,751 individuals.

## Plattsburgh CBC

The 2014 count was held on Sunday, December 14, from 7:00a.m. to 4:45p.m. Temperatures ranged from 17 °F to 33 °F. Winds were from the north, with a max wind speed of 12 mph. Thirty field observers and eight feeder watchers recorded 56 species and 16,790 individuals. Highlights of the count included 2 female harlequin ducks, two Iceland gulls, and a hermit thrush.

**Totals:** Common Loon 4, Horned Grebe 10, Canada Goose 1421, Snow Goose 93, Mallard 245, American Black Duck 9, Greater Scaup 10, Lesser Scaup 110, Common Goldeneye 394, Bufflehead 2, Hooded Merganser 15, Common Merganser 211, Cooper's Hawk 3, Accipiter sp. 1, Red-tailed Hawk 18, Rough-legged Hawk 1, Bald Eagle 6, Peregrine Falcon 1, Wild Turkey 12, Ring-billed Gull 743, Herring Gull 200, Glaucous Gull 3, Iceland Gull 2, Great Black-backed Gull 148, gull sp. 86, Mourning Dove 435, Rock Pigeon 553, Downy Woodpecker 40, Hairy Woodpecker 21, Pileated Woodpecker 15, Northern Shrike 2, Blue Jay 240, American Crow 9216, Horned Lark 75, Tufted Titmouse 11, Black-capped Chickadee 354, Red-breasted Nuthatch 13, White-breasted Nuthatch 54, Brown Creeper 1, Eastern Bluebird 41, American Robin 34, Northern Mockingbird 1, European Starling 1126, Cedar Waxwing 51, Northern Cardinal 60, American Tree Sparrow 167, White-crowned Sparrow 3, Song Sparrow 1, Dark-eyed Junco 207, Snow Bunting 108, Red-winged Blackbird 1, Purple Finch 1, House Finch 44, Pine Siskin 3, American Goldfinch 96, House Sparrow 58, Barrow's Goldeneye 1, Harlequin Duck 2, Northern Pintail 1, Ring-necked Duck 5, Hermit Thrush 1.



## Saranac Lake CBC

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Saranac Lake CBC. We ended up with 38 species and 2556 individual birds. The most unusual sightings were merlin (first confirmed record in the 59 years of this count), sharp-shinned hawk (4<sup>th</sup> record) and a flock(s) of 52 red crossbills (2<sup>nd</sup> highest count). Missed (birds seen most years but not this year) were any owls, northern shrike, snow bunting, grackle, cowbird and evening grosbeak. Also, the “reliable” (every other year) redpolls are slow to show up in any numbers so far this winter; more than 1,500 redpolls have been counted in other flight years.

**Totals:** American black duck, 8; mallard, 342; hooded merganser, 15; common merganser, 2; ruffed grouse, 5; wild turkey, 25; bald eagle, 1; **sharp-shinned hawk**, 1; rock pigeon, 312; mourning dove, 37; belted kingfisher, 1; **merlin**, 1; downy woodpecker, 34; hairy woodpecker 46; black-backed woodpecker, 3; pileated woodpecker, 11; gray jay, 16; blue jay, 120; American crow, 149; common raven, 39; black-capped chickadee, 986; boreal chickadee, 5; red-breasted nuthatch, 49; white-breasted nuthatch, 50; brown creeper, 5; golden-crowned kinglet, 18; American robin, 1; European starling, 42; American tree sparrow, 37; white-throated sparrow, 5; dark-eyed (slate-colored) junco, 30; red-winged blackbird, 3; northern cardinal, 23; red crossbill, 52; American goldfinch, 39; pine siskin, 1; common redpoll, 26; house sparrow, 16.

### Wetland Detectives Training Workshop I – Observing Frogs, Birds, and Plants

Saturday, March 21, 2015

9:00 – 12:00 PM (at Newcomb AIC)

2:00 – 5:00 PM (at Paul Smith’s VIC)

Join the Wetland Detective Monitoring Corps! Upcoming public workshops will give you the opportunity to learn more about the natural world while also helping protect it. Become a citizen scientist and learn how to collect information on plants, birds and amphibians in Adirondack boreal wetland ecosystems. At this training workshop, we will provide a brief overview of the project, boreal wetlands, and phenology – the study of biological timing and cycles. Next, participate in three interactive modules that will teach you how to identify target amphibian, bird, and plant species by sight and sound. We will listen to frog and bird calls and examine wetland plant leaves and flowers. Finally, we will show you how to record observations of these animals and plants. Attending this workshop will prepare you for our spring workshop on May 30<sup>th</sup>, when we will put these observational skills to use in a guided, outdoor visit to a wetland site. To sign up, please RSVP to Kristin Pasquino and mention which workshop you will attend (phone: [518-582-2000 x12](tel:518-582-2000); email: [aic@esf.edu](mailto:aic@esf.edu)). No prior citizen science experience is necessary – bring a friend! Please check out the project website (<http://www.esf.edu/aic/citizenscience.htm>) for more information and updates.

### **\*\*Deadlines for Grant Applications\*\***

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

The email deadline is April 10, 2015; the USPS deadline is April 7, 2015.

## Crown Point Bird Banding Station 40th Anniversary Season Celebration

**Friday, May 9th - Saturday, May 23rd**

The Crown Point Bird Banding Station will celebrate its 40th consecutive year of bird banding this spring, and everyone is welcome to come and take part in the banding, data recording and photographing of birds.

Established in 1976 by J.M.C. “Mike” Peterson, this banding Station has been monitoring spring migrant birds, by using banding, longer than all but a few banding stations in North America east of the Mississippi River.

The Banding Station attracts hundreds of visitors each year, from professional ornithologists to elementary school classes to curious Crown Point Historic Site visitors, and in my experience everyone always has a good time. Children get the unique experience of releasing birds after they have been banded and their data (age, sex, etc.) recorded, and Gordon Howard, the master bander who operates the station, along with Gary Lee, photographs the kids as they hold the birds in their hands and make faces and shriek with glee as they release usually unhappy and squawking birds.

**To confirm the dates contact: [ghoward@clermson.edu](mailto:ghoward@clermson.edu)**

### Wetland Detectives Training Workshop II – Outdoor Observation

Saturday, May 30, 2015

9:00 – 12:00 PM (at Newcomb AIC)

2:00 – 5:00 PM (at Paul Smith’s VIC)

The second workshop in our Wetland Detective public training series will be outdoors! Participants will have the chance to explore a nearby wetland site where we will practice amphibian, bird, and plant monitoring skills presented during February and March workshops. And if you were unable to attend our February and March workshops, that’s OK! We still want you to join us. You will find that wetland monitoring is a great excuse to be outside taking in the sights and sounds of spring. By the end of the training workshop, you will have the tools you need to “adopt a wetland” and join the monitoring program’s team of citizen scientists. At the end, we will assign you with a wetland site for “adoption” that is located near you. By taking part in this workshop, you will join a community of people and institutions committed to improving our understanding of Adirondack wetlands and conserving these unique places for future generations. To sign up, please RSVP to Kristin Pasquino and mention which workshop you will attend (phone: [518-582-2000 x12](tel:518-582-2000); email: [kpasquin@esf.edu](mailto:kpasquin@esf.edu)). No prior citizen science experience is necessary – bring a friend! Please check out the project website (<http://www.esf.edu/aic/citizenscience.htm>) for more information and updates.

## Editor's Note

Aside from the cloud-like shadows of chimney smoke rolling across the luminous trunks and branches of leafless hardwood trees stunningly luminous in the sun, and wafting over the shelves of conifer needles weighed down fairly heavily with snow, the landscape outside my living room window looked preternaturally still in the late afternoon, late February sun and brought to mind the play of reflections on the undersides of a bridge, the rippling, undulating, impossible to describe motions of water and light on a still surface. After a few moments the entire vista seemed suffused with movement, with the rolling and wafting smoke shadows suddenly supplemented by widely scattered and random small twigs and branches suddenly hiccupping as birds lit on or flew from them, as one of the bird feeders started rocking from side to side like a lethargic pendulum, reacting, reluctantly, to bird visits scarcely capable of making it move. For reasons I won't even attempt to understand the scene had me thinking of a Bruegel painting, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus," a sylvan scene of a land and waterscape utterly tranquil and at peace except for the almost imperceptible evidence of a splash—the crash of Icarus into the ocean after his failed attempt to escape prison on wings his father, Dedaelus, made for him. Dedaelus warned Icarus to avoid the sun for its heat would melt the wax holding his assemblage of feathers in place. Alas, poor Icarus, couldn't help but exultantly fly too close to the sun.

The moment made me think of a meeting earlier in the day at which Wendy Hall, the animal rehabilitator, talked about all the red-necked grebes being brought into animal rehab facilities all over the state, most of them soaking wet and apparently unable to preen and oil their feathers against water. The general consensus has it that the grebes seem to be falling out of the sky not for flying too close to the sun but for a lack of open water in the Great Lakes and Lake Champlain, presumably exhausted in their southward flight in search of open water, but who knows, really, what's afoot? This problem seems to have started last year (a red-necked grebe almost collided with my windshield as I drove from Keene to Elizabethtown on Route 9N, as improbable a place to see a grebe as a loon) and doesn't seem about to go away anytime soon.

We need to learn from water-logged grebes the perennial environmental lesson: that compromised environments engender compromised species, and that while we have rehabilitators to remediate severely compromised animals we don't have politicians willing to remediate compromised environments. Wildlife rehabilitators probably get access to a scandalously small percentage of impaired animals, like flightless and water-saturated grebes, and their efforts represent, essentially, a band-aid on a metastatic cancer, albeit something of a wake-up call for those of us listening.

As I prepared to leave Wendy and Steve Hall's house, I went to the bathroom and noticed a red-necked grebe sitting on a blanket at the back end of the bathtub, and as I proceeded to relieve myself couldn't help but notice the grebe get off the blanket, shuffle clumsily onto the porcelain below and, in the shallow swath of water there, relieve itself.

It represented a rare moment of interspecific coevacuation...

—**John Thaxton**