



Northern New York Audubon

June - August 2023 Newsletter

Volume 51, Issue 2

Dear Friends -

Northern New York Audubon is dedicated to conserving and restoring natural ecosystems in the Adirondacks, focusing on habitat of particular importance to birds, other wildlife, humanity, and the Earth's biological diversity as a whole. As one of National Audubon's 27 local chapters in New York, NNYA's mission is to "promote the protection and proper management of birds, wildlife, and fragile ecosystems throughout Northern New York."

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Driving from Keeseville to Tupper Lake on May 24, I observed the following native trees and shrubs in bloom - black cherry, serviceberry, scarlet elderberry, hobblebush and mountain ash. Lowbush blueberry was also in bloom but it's a small shrub and I WAS trying to stay on the road. These early blooming native plants support early pollinators. The ripening of the fruit in summer is timed perfectly as adult birds and chicks transition from a diet of primarily insects to nutritious fruit. Consulting 'American Wildlife & Plants, A Guide to Wildlife Food Habits' I counted 31 bird species in the northern New York region that consume elderberries, 22 bird species that consume serviceberries and 28 bird species that consume black cherries. My guess is that there are many more. These native plants support the wildlife that we all love to see. If you are adding plants to your landscape, please consider planting natives. and feel free to contact Northern New York Audubon for recommendations or advice!



Photo by Larry Master

Catherine Smith, Co-President

Book Review

Sparrow Envy: Field Guide to Birds and Lesser Beasts
By J. Drew Lanham (2021)

About the Author

Dr. J. Drew Lanham is a professor of ecology at Clemson University where he teaches courses in ornithology and wildlife management. Professor Lanham has a lifelong love of birds and the role they have as connectors across time, place, and cultures. Dr. Lanham is often interviewed about the role of African Americans in natural resources conservation.

About the Book

Less than 100 pages, "Sparrow Envy" is brief, but impactful. The book is a compilation of poems and essays that do not need to be read in sequence. Lanham's writing style is unique, and I needed to read many of the poems several times to comprehend their meaning. The poems and essays are sorted into three sections: Birds; Lesser Beasts; and Meanings & Regulatory Ramble. "Birds" includes poetic descriptors of bird migration, feeding, nesting, and other behaviors. "Lesser Beasts" poems describe Lanham's personal thoughts and emotions while observing the wonders of nature. "Meanings & Regulatory Ramble" features "nine rules for the black birder" and "how to adore birds." Some of my favorites are "migration," "egg blues," "hard pan life," and "deer worship."

Ken Adams





Northern New York Audubon
P.O. Box 1172
Saranac Lake, NY 12983
Email: nnya@nnya.org
Website: www.nnya.org

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NNYA Partners with ESF Service Learning Class

NNYA partnered with four SUNY ESF students on a service learning project for the Spring 2023 semester. The students worked with NNYA board member Hyla Howe to design social media posts, create a content calendar, and design a map of the NNYA's territory to feature Important Bird Areas, eBird hotspots, and areas that are accessible to people with mobility challenges. We are excited to work with young birders to increase knowledge and accessibility for birders of all kinds throughout our territory. One of the highlights of the semester for our students was meeting Joan Collins to learn more about her vast experience birding in the North Country. Thank you to everyone that worked hard to make this semester a success!

Hyla Howe

David Sibley Talk at SUNY Plattsburgh - The Psychology of Bird Identification or How to Mistake an Egret for a Shrike

This was an intriguing title that attracted more than 300 enthusiastic people to the David Sibley talk at SUNY Plattsburgh on April 14th. The thrust of his message was for birders to be aware of how optical illusions can affect identification of birds.

Sibley provided examples from classical research on optical illusions and illustrated how these can cause misidentifications.

His examples of amazing optical illusions included how we can make errors in our perception of colors, shapes, sizes, and distances. Being aware of potential optical illusions can help us minimize misidentification of birds, especially under certain light conditions and when we have only brief glimpses or partial views of birds.

Sibley provided several examples of bird misidentifications he's made in the past. In one example, he described birding in a field early one morning as the fog was lifting. He was very excited when he was sure that he saw a northern shrike posed on the tip of a post. A rare sighting for that area! When he moved to get a better look, the shrike was not there. What he did see was the neck and head profile of a great egret!

With experience, of course, birds are most often identified correctly. However, we all make mistakes, and we should embrace our mistakes to avoid them in the future. We should admit that mistakes are a part of bird watching and we should not feel embarrassed when they happen.

David A. Sibley was born in Plattsburgh, New York on October 22, 1961. His father, a Yale ornithologist, taught biology at the W.H. Miner Agricultural Research Institute that year. Sibley began drawing birds at the age of seven while he explored nature in his home state of Connecticut. Sibley is the author and illustrator of the Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Eastern North America and several other field guides.

NNYA contributed to Sibley's presentation by the purchase of 20 Sibley Field Guides which were awarded to Plattsburgh students.

Ken Adams



Photo by Mark Lesser

Never Too Late For Summer Camp!

Growing up I never had the opportunity to attend a summer camp, but fortunately it's never too late. In 2022, I was awarded the Northern New York Audubon Hog Island Audubon Camp Educator Scholarship, which allowed me to surround myself with others filled with a passion to share their knowledge and love of the natural world. I have been an Assistant Professor at State University of New York College of Environmental Forestry and Science since 2018. I work at our Wanakena campus (the Ranger School) in the Adirondack Park and teach wildlife and Geographic Information System (GIS) courses. Arriving fresh out of graduate school, I wanted to have the opportunity to build on my teaching skills and continue to develop my knowledge of nature. Escaping to an island off the coast of Maine and sharing that space with others with a common goal seemed like the perfect opportunity. The Sharing Nature: An Educator's Week camp did not disappoint, and there, I was able to make new connections that I hope will continue for many years to come.

A short boat trip will take you and your pack to Hog Island where you are instantly greeted at the dock with enthusiasm and then given time to settle in and get acquainted with your new surroundings. I had the opportunity to stay in a room above the lab which sits on stilts partially over the water, even your view from the bathroom is the ocean. The lab was filled with materials, specimens, and books for guests to explore. One of the first things that caught my eye was the book of pressed algae from the early 1800s. Later we would learn to press algae (or "seaweed") that we collected on an intertidal exploration.

During our first afternoon together, we spent time gathered outside as the instructors introduced themselves and the program. We made rounds introducing ourselves, where we are from, and what we teach. The group of students and instructors came from across the country and taught a variety of ages from preschool to adults. Some of us taught in formal classroom settings with explorations outside, while others were leaders in their communities offering camping, hiking, and other outdoor activities. I knew right away that this would be an amazing group to learn with and from.

That evening after dinner we all gathered in the indoor presentation space and were introduced to the Project Puffin by photojournalist and author Derrick Jackson. He plays an integral role in Audubon's Seabird Institute, instructs photography for another Hog Island camp, and helps support other educators of color through a scholarship program for Hog Island. Jackson awed us during his presentation with his stunning puffin photographs and got the crowd going with his puffin-themed rap.

This first evening set the stage for what a typical day would be like at camp. Each morning, we had the option to wake up early to go birding around the island, with hot tea and coffee ready to go. A few of us would get together in small groups to search for birds and learn from each other, excited to see and hear any bird we could find, while also connecting through our shared eBird checklists. We would return to a group breakfast, outdoors under a large tent. Instructors would share the itinerary for the day and what to expect. This involved outdoor exploration and options to choose from different learning and sharing workshops. In the evenings we would have a group gathering for a presentation by one of our expert instructors.

I was excited for each new day and was able to take away new perspectives and ideas for teaching. It's impossible to pick a favorite lesson, but some favorites included intertidal exploration and algae plant pressing with Dr. Camille Gaynus, marine scientist and Board Chair of Black in Marine Science (BIMS; blackinmarinescience.org).



Photos by Vanessa Rojas

Never Too Late For Summer Camp, cont.

Dr. Gaynus shared her expertise in algae identification and pressing (a fun activity for students of all ages), and I plan to highlight and include BIMS materials in my courses. Workshops and conversations with instructor, CJ Goulding, co-founder and director of Boyz N The Wood (boyznthewood.org), were also inspiring.

We discussed engaging and connecting with the community and nature, while also creating the foundations for positive social change. Through various activities, including a hike around the island, presentations, and trivia, we continued to learn about Indigenous Peoples of the area. This is often overlooked in curricula and was a reminder for myself to explore new ways to implement this important component into my courses.

It would be remiss of me to not mention our day at sea to visit the Atlantic Puffin colony at Eastern Egg Rock. It was, of course, a day we were all quite excited about. The weather was perfect for viewing puffins up close from the boat. The island was loud with activity, and puffins were flying and swimming all around us. There were also plenty of Common Terns, Black Guillemot, Common Eiders, Laughing Gulls, and we got a good look at a favorite of mine, the Razorbill. It was impressive to see this many birds in one region, and such a privilege to share this opportunity with new friends.

Learning and experiencing new skills and information is critical for my teaching, but this opportunity allowed me to gain more than just new skills. The connections and new friends I made has been truly meaningful. It was exciting to be in a place where diversity was respected, discussed, and BIPOC were leaders and instructors for the program. Attending the camp also helped to increase my confidence as a scientist and teacher. Being a first-generation college graduate and a woman of color in a scientific field, it is of particular importance to me to build my confidence so that I can better help students navigate this challenging terrain. It is my objective to inspire and encourage others from diverse backgrounds to join and continue in the field of science by creating an unbiased, supportive environment for all students. Thank you again to NNYA for awarding me with this grant and invaluable experience.

Vanessa Rojas



New Program at the Cascade Welcome Center

Saturdays, June 3, June 10, and June 17, 2023

"Peaking" at Adirondack Birds of the High Peaks Region

Meeting Time: 7:30-9:30 a.m.

Location: Participants will meet at Cascade Welcome Center on the side porch near the parking lot.

To Register: Encouraged but not required - <https://adk.org/naturalist-series/>

Bring: Bug repellent, binoculars (but some can be provided if necessary), sun protection, water, appropriate shoes and clothes.

Brief Description: The Adirondack Mountain Club's Cascade Welcome Center will be hosting 6 free birding walks during the spring. Each program is open to all ages and aims to connect locals and visitors to the natural wonders of the Adirondack High Peaks Region.

As breeding birds return to the Adirondacks in the spring, it is a great time to start birding! At Cascade Welcome Center, you'll enjoy a pleasant walk on maintained trails through a variety of habitats with an experienced birder, observing many different species and Peak views along the way. Warblers, thrushes, woodpeckers, and more call these woods and wetlands home. In addition to bird observations, participants will learn how different habitats attract different species of birds.

These trips are for all ages and abilities, whether you've been birding for years or if it's your first time. Trips will start with a short introduction at the Center and then head out on the trails. Trails may be wet at times. Restrooms will be available prior to the trip.

These walks are funded by The Cullman Grant awarded by Northern New York Audubon.



Photo by Larry Master

Annual Outing & Presentation for Members

Saturday, August 5, 2023, Rensselaer Falls

Come spend a fun day with fellow Northern New York Audubon members and other birders this summer! This year's outing will feature morning birding at the Indian Creek Nature Center in Rensselaer Falls, NY. Lunch will be at the Pavilion at Indian Creek Nature Center and include a chapter update. A presentation from Dr. Tom Langen on the decline of the Golden-winged Warbler will follow lunch. Here are more details:

Field Trips:

Meet Joan Collins and Mary Beth Warburton at the Indian Creek Nature Center Parking area at 8 a.m. The Center is located at 770 County Route 14 (CR14), Rensselaer Falls, New York. From Canton, take NY68 approximately six miles, turning left on CR14 toward Rensselaer Falls. Proceed approximately 3.5 miles to the ICNC main entrance on the left. There are large, well-maintained outhouses located at this parking area.

Indian Creek Nature Center (300 acres of upland and marsh habitat) is part of the Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area (WMA) which includes 8,782 acres. This WMA is included in the Lisbon Grasslands Important Bird Area (IBA) designated by Audubon New York.

Participants will hike two popular trails (of the seven trails found at the Center) before lunch. The first trail, the Boardwalk and Observation Deck Trail, is approximately a 1-mile loop trail that includes a 750-foot-long boardwalk with views of a pond and beaver impoundment. At the farthest point is an observation deck that overlooks the marsh. The Boardwalk is an accessible hiking trail providing access to a diversity of habitats. The second trail, the Observation Tower Trail, has similar hiking mileage. The tower is about 20 feet tall and provides for expansive views of the Upper and Lower Lake WMA. The tower is a great location for bird watching. The hikes will offer wetland, deciduous forest, and shrubland habitats with a wide variety of species! Participants should bring lunch, water, appropriate waterproof jacket and hiking footwear, hat, sunscreen, insect spray, binoculars, and scope if you have one (the leaders will have their scopes to share with participants). There are ticks in the St. Lawrence Valley, so insect spray is recommended.

Lunch and Short Meeting with NNYA Updates:

Lunch will be held around noon at the covered Pavilion near the main parking lot. Janet Mihuc, Co-President of NNYA, will give an update on NNYA activities before our speaker at 1 p.m.

Speaker:

Tom Langen, "The Decline of Golden-winged Warblers and other Shrubland Species"

Description: Golden-winged warblers are one of the highest priority species for conservation in North America, due to dramatic recent declines in abundance and distribution. One of its strongholds is the St. Lawrence Valley of New York. Other species that share its shrubland habitat such as the eastern towhee and brown thrasher are also in decline, although not as severely. A major factor in the decline of shrubland species is a change in land use associated with changes in agriculture. In this presentation, I will explain some of the causes of the decline of the golden-winged warbler and other shrubland species. I will also present ways that we might manage land to maintain these interesting birds in northern New York.

Bio: Dr. Tom Langen is a Professor of Biology and Psychology at Clarkson University. His research focuses on the environmental impact of roads, the ecosystem services and conservation importance of restored wetlands, and the habitat requirements of threatened species such as the golden-winged warblers in the St. Lawrence Valley. He teaches courses in ecology, animal behavior, and conservation biology. Tom is a long-time board member of Northern New York Audubon. More information can be found at www.clarkson.edu/~tlangen.

Registration:

To register please contact Joan Collins at JoanCollins@AdirondackAvianExpeditions.com or 518-624-5528 or Mary Beth Warburton msmarybeth.warburton@gmail.com or 315-268-0150.

We hope you can attend the day's events with fellow NNYA members!



Golden-winged Warbler

Photo by Larry Master

Events and Field Trips - June, July and August 2023

19th Great Adirondack Birding Celebration

June 2, 3, and 4, 2023

Sponsored by Paul Smith's Visitor Interpretive Center (VIC), and in partnership with Northern New York Audubon, the 19th Great Adirondack Birding Celebration features field trips, workshops and speakers at the VIC and numerous birding locations in Essex and Franklin Counties. The three day event is designed to introduce birders of all ages and skill levels to the unique boreal bird species and habitats in the Adirondack Park. The celebration offers birding field trips to local Important Bird Areas (IBAs), with full day field trips on Friday and half day trips on Saturday and Sunday. The trips have limited capacity so register soon!



Ivan Phillipson is the keynote speaker for this event. Ivan is the host and creator of the very informative and fun podcast 'The Science of Birds'. He is a professional naturalist guide with a background in scientific research.

Website: <https://www.paulsmithsvic.org/event/great-adirondack-birding-celebration-gabc>

Phone: 518-327-6241 Email: vic@paulsmiths.edu

17th Adirondack Birding Festival

June 8, 9, 10, and 11, 2023

Sponsored by Hamilton County Department of Tourism, Audubon New York, and Northern New York Audubon, the 17th Adirondack Birding Festival features free field trips across Hamilton, Essex, Franklin, and St. Lawrence Counties, a keynote presentation, and a social dinner event. Here are some of the events including several accessible field trips:

Field Trips:

Driving Safari/Walk: Perkins Clearing (offered twice)	Hitchins Pond
Sacandaga Pathway	Still Birding: Bog River Falls Parking Area
Shaw Pond and Sabattis Circle Road	Roosevelt Truck Trail
Powley Road	Lilypad Pond Trail
Dillon Road	Still Birding: John Dillon Park
Massawepie Mire	Fiddlers Pond
Family Hike: Forked Lake	Minerva Railbed Wetlands and More
Driving Safari/Walk: Elm Lake Road	Lake Durant Marsh

Keynote Presentation:

Julie Hart: "What's Hatching in New York" at Adirondack Experience in Blue Mt. Lake at Saturday, June 10, 2023 at 4 p.m. This presentation is made possible by a Cullman Grant from Northern New York Audubon.

Social Dinner:

Adirondack Hotel Dining Room in Long Lake on Saturday, June 10, 2023 at 6 p.m.

Website: <https://www.adirondackexperience.com/events/adirondack-boreal-birding-festival>

(schedule link at bottom); Phone 518-548-3076 to register.

Wednesday, June 28, 2023

Flat Rock and Cobblestone Hill

Meeting Time: 5:00 p.m.

Location: Meet at Parker Family Maple Farm, 1043 Slosson Road, West Chazy, 12992. We will caravan (and carpool if desired) on Barnaby Road 1.2 miles and park at Miner Institute's gate. This road surface is sand and gravel.

Bring: Binoculars, camera, sandwich and snack, water, insect repellent, head lamp

To Register: Email: kenneth.adams@plattsburgh.edu Cell phone (518) 569-2855 or heintz.judith@gmail.com

Brief Description: This area is the southeastern corner of the jack pine sandstone pavement barren, adjacent to the oak-northern hardwood forest on cobblestone hill. We will also visit a fen wetland in the abandoned dam and an oak-hemlock riparian forest. Nighthawks will begin aerial display at dusk and whip-poor-wills can be heard after dark. Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Group size limited to 12.

Priority given to members of Northern New York Audubon.

Events and Field Trips, cont.

Tuesday, July 25, 2023

Railbed Wetlands and More

Minerva, NY

Meeting Time: 7 a.m.

Location: Participants will meet at Overlook Park in Newcomb (restrooms at this location) and we will car-caravan to a dirt parking area up the hill from the railbed.

Bring: Food, water, a jacket, appropriate attire/hiking shoes, binoculars, hat, sunscreen, and insect spray.

To Register: Call the Long Lake Parks and Recreation Department at 518-624-3077.

Brief Description: Join Joan Collins for a walk on a railbed through wonderful wetlands and forests! The old railbed travels along Vanderwhacker Brook at the beginning of the walk with fascinating marshes and ponds (and interesting plants!). There are also boreal forest sections. We will hike at the pace of the group and our birding, likely walking a few miles round trip. Some of the species we may find include: Wood Duck; American Black Duck; Hooded and Common Mergansers; Black-billed Cuckoo; Ruby-throated Hummingbird; Virginia Rail; American Bittern; Great Blue Heron; Broad-winged Hawk; Belted Kingfisher; Black-backed Woodpecker; Eastern Kingbird; Olive-sided Flycatcher; Eastern Wood-Pewee; Yellow-bellied Flycatcher; Alder Flycatcher; Least Flycatcher; Eastern Phoebe; Boreal Chickadee; Winter Wren; Swainson's Thrush; Hermit Thrush; White-throated Sparrow; Swamp Sparrow; Rusty Blackbird; and many warblers including Ovenbird, Northern Waterthrush, Black-and-white Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Northern Parula, Magnolia Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, and Canada Warbler. This field trip is jointly sponsored by Northern New York Audubon and the Long Lake Parks and Recreation Department. There is a maximum of 15 participants.

Tuesday, August 8, 2023

Roosevelt Truck Trail

Minerva, NY

Meeting Time: 7 a.m.

Location: Meet at the Geiger Arena parking area in Long Lake at 7 a.m. for transportation to the trailhead on Long Lake's "Little Bus". There is a restroom at the Geiger Arena, and there are two outhouses along the trail at camping locations (& picnic tables).

Bring: Food, water, a jacket, appropriate attire/hiking shoes, binoculars, hat, sunscreen, and insect spray.

To Register: Call the Long Lake Parks and Recreation Department at 518-624-3077.

Brief Description: Lovely, mature boreal habitat spans the 2.5-mile-long Roosevelt Truck Trail. This wide, road-sized trail runs between Route 28N and the Blue Ridge Road in Minerva. Joan Collins will lead a hike along this route beginning at the Blue Ridge Road trailhead and ending at the Route 28N trailhead. The trail has hilly and level terrain with an overall loss of 100 feet in elevation by the end of our hike. The habitat along the route provides a year-round home to many boreal bird species including Black-backed Woodpecker, Canada Jay, and Boreal Chickadee. Participants will also be looking for animal tracks – Black Bear and Moose tracks are frequently found on this old road. In August, the Roosevelt Truck Trail is a wonderful place to look for mushrooms and lichens. This field trip is jointly sponsored by Northern New York Audubon and the Long Lake Parks and Recreation Department. There is a maximum of 15 participants.

NNYA Trip Photos



Photo by Amy Bedard



Photo by Joan Collins



Photo by Ken Adams



Photo by Erin Pangborn



Photo By Amy Bedard

Northern New York Audubon Newsletter

Welcome new members!

Alan & Deb Dickinson
John Fritzinger
Kate Graham
John Johnson
Kelly Moody
Margaret Morrow
Yaron Schmid



Ivan Phillipsen, The Science of Birds

To renew or to become
a member, please visit
[https://www.NNYA.org/
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Northern New York Audubon
PO Box 1172
Saranac Lake, NY
12983

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