



Northern New York Audubon

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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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I befriended Ivan Phillipson after listening to his 'The Science of Birds' podcast during peak pandemic shutdown. Ivan is smart and funny and his program is fascinating. <https://www.scienceofbirds.com/>

After the launch of the Northern New York Audubon online store, I reached out to Ivan to promote our shirt and sure enough he loved it and made a purchase. Ivan travels a lot. In this fantastic photo, Ivan is sporting the NNYA spruce grouse t-shirt while birding on a hillside of lava and moss. Any idea where Ivan is? ***Our shirt made it to HAWAII!***

This issue of our newsletter is chock full of information with contributions from many of our board members including a timely and provocative opinion piece, an update on our exciting Farm Grant Program, and a guest contribution from our friend, NNYA member and master naturalist Brian McAllister. And, please don't miss the long list of upcoming birding events compiled by board member Joan Collins. Register early and mark your calendars!

Renowned ornithologist and author-illustrator **David Sibley** will be speaking at 7 pm on Friday, April 14, at SUNY Plattsburgh, Yokum Hall, Room 200. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Hope to see you at one or more of our events! Catherine Smith and Janet Mihuc, Co-Presidents

Sunday Morning Birding with Janelle Jones! Adirondack Mountain Club's Cascade Welcome Center

Time: 10 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.

Location: Cascade Welcome Center at 4833 Cascade Road, Lake Placid
For more information: 518-837-5047 and ADK.org

Description: If you've ever been curious about all the chirps and chips you hear in the forests, join ADK for a winter birding snowshoe walk on Sunday mornings! Not all birds migrate south for the winter and now is the perfect time to learn about (and observe!) the hardy species that spend the winter in the Adirondacks. The variety of habitat at Cascade Welcome Center offers chances to see many different species, including: Canada Jay, raptors, Evening Grosbeak, American Goldfinch, Dark-eyed Junco, woodpeckers, Black-capped Chickadee (and maybe if we're lucky Boreal Chickadee), and many more. 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. Snowshoe rentals and binoculars can be provided free of charge for all programs. Participants should come prepared with warm layers to spend at least an hour outside in subfreezing temperatures. Walks are cosponsored with Northern NY Audubon.



Ivan Phillipson

Year One of the Farm Grant Program was a Success!



Northern New York Audubon

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NNYA's Small Farm Grant began with a conversation between a handful of board members in the coffeeshop of Nori's Village Market in the fall of 2020, and officially launched last July at our "Farm Trivia" event at Hex and Hop Brewery in Bloomingdale. We are excited to announce that we completed our first application cycle and awarded grants to four north country farms. We are grateful to every person who contributed to the grant this year, and we look forward to expanding the program as we move forward.

With our large and diverse territory encompassing nearly all of Northern New York, from the central Adirondacks east to the Champlain Valley and north to the St. Lawrence River, it can be hard to decide in which habitats and communities to focus conservation efforts. Interestingly enough, the habitats that are often prioritized (alpine and forested environments) are not always the ones that support the greatest species diversity, or the most at-risk species. Somewhat unsurprisingly, the grassland and shrubland bird species that faced the largest population declines nationwide over the last 50 years rely on hayfields and shrublands throughout our territory that exist almost entirely on privately owned land.

Growing up in the farmland-turned-suburbs of south central Pennsylvania, I experienced firsthand the loss of farmland that is an all-too-familiar story in so much of the country. Simultaneously, the intensification of agriculture in the Midwest, the abandonment of farms in New England, and the fragmentation and development of farmland in the Mid-Atlantic has eliminated giant swathes of habitat for the species who need it the most.

It is easy to feel hopeless when we talk about the scope of habitat loss, but I believe that it can also be a source of hope. As Robin Wall Kimmerer observes in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, "the cure often grows near to the cause". If so, we should be investing in our local farms, opening lines of communication between biologists and land managers, and forging relationships between birders and food-producers. Our Adirondack farms are an immense regional asset with the ability to feed our communities and protect some of our most threatened wildlife.

Over the past year, we raised \$5,490, through donations, fundraising events, and a start-up investment from NNYA. We want to extend a special thank you to Nori's Village Market in Saranac Lake for their donation of \$1,500 that fully funded one very deserving project. We are excited to have them on board as our first business sponsor. The Farm Grant was featured on radio, television, and in several newspapers. We heard from over 40 farms and hosted 3 informational zoom sessions for farmers. In the end, we received 17 applications and were able to provide funding to 5 farms. The funded projects include implementing bird-friendly silvopasture on 45 acres of open pasture on a dairy farm, planting a hedgerow of native fruiting shrubs on a sheep farm, improving bird habitat on an educational garden that partners with WIC to provide free pick-your-own events to Adirondack families, the construction of a pond and shrubland area that will be sustainably grazed by cattle, and the restoration of a wildlife corridor on a sheep farm with raptor perches to reduce predation of root vegetables. It was a difficult decision process because of the high number of competitive applications, which speaks to the need for this funding in the North Country.

There are several ways that you can help us to increase our investment into North Country farms this year: help with a project's implementation at one of our volunteer work days this summer (email farmgrant@nnya.org), make a contribution to the Farm Grant, or make a point to shop locally at farmers markets, co-ops, and roadside stands. By working together, we can support our local farms, strengthen relationships with farmers, and promote the protection of vulnerable bird species in the North Country.

What's In a Name?

In "Romeo and Juliet," William Shakespeare wrote "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." What a bird is called doesn't change its innate attributes; a bird's nature is more important than its name. Does a bird care about its scientific name or its common name in any language? So, what's the fuss all about? Maybe the point is **we** care! Field guides are organized by bird names; in years past, we recorded the names of birds identified by sight and song in our field notebooks; now we can use eBird. We rely on bird names to communicate our observations with others, both in the moment and in written records.

Realizing the usefulness of naming birds, it's important to ask if bird names themselves have any worth or meaning. How did birds get their English common names in the first place? Sometimes birds are named after their color, voice, behavior, or preferred habitat, such as "indigo bunting," "mockingbird," "ovenbird," and "field sparrow."

Some birds have eponymous names such as "Kirtland's warbler," Bicknell's thrush," "Henslow's sparrow," and "Wilson's snipe." Kirtland's warbler was named to honor Jared P. Kirtland (1793-1877), a physician, politician, and amateur naturalist. Eugene P. Bicknell (1859-1925) was a New York botanist and naturalist who discovered a thrush that was given his name. Henslow's sparrow was named to honor John S. Henslow (1796-1861), a British priest, botanist, and geologist who was a mentor to Charles Darwin. The name Wilson's snipe commemorates Alexander Wilson (1766-1813), the greatest American ornithologist of the 18th century. These are examples of birds named after Euro-American men who are generally thought to be of reputable character, albeit espousing cultural biases of the time.

However, there are examples of birds named after Euro-American men with noteworthy achievements as naturalists, but who were white supremacists, some of whom committed unspeakable acts. LeConte's sparrow was named after John L. LeConte (1818-1891), physician, professor of physics and chemistry, and an ardent white supremacist. Bachman's sparrow and Bachman's warbler were named to honor John Bachman (1790-1874), minister of St. John's Lutheran Church, Charleston, SC. John Bachman was a slave-owning minister who preached that "the negro is greatly inferior to that of the Caucasian, and is therefore, incapable of self-government. Our defense of slavery is contained in the Holy Scriptures."

Townsend's solitaire and Townsend's warbler were named after the naturalist, John K. Townsend (1809-1851). Townsend joined an expedition to western North America to collect specimens of small mammals and birds. This provided an opportunity for Townsend's friend, Samuel G. Morton, to ask a favor. Dr. Morton was determined to show that human cranial characteristics could be used to prove that Caucasians were the superior race. Townsend acknowledged Morton's request to collect skulls of indigenous people. To do so, Townsend desecrated the graves of Chinook and other indigenous people. Do Townsend's contributions to ornithology outweigh his contributions to fraudulent phrenology and "scientific" racism?

The names Audubon's oriole and Audubon's warbler, among many other birds, honor America's most famous artist and ornithologist, John J. Audubon (1785-1851). Audubon's spectacular "The Birds of America" contains 435 life-size watercolors of North American birds. His fame as one of the nation's best wildlife illustrators has become tarnished, however, with revelations of his plagiarism, slave ownership, and theft of indigenous remains. Audubon removed the skulls from deceased native Americans and Mexican soldiers killed in battle to support Dr. Morton's misguided biological racism. Does this racist legacy bring cause to change the many eponyms intended to honor Audubon's contributions to ornithology? Answers may be found in Audubon Magazine's (Spring 2021) issue "What Do We Do About John James Audubon?" by J. Drew Lanham.

It's probably not fair to judge people who lived in past centuries by modern social norms, but as Maya Angelou said, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better. We, as a society, did what we thought was right then. Now we know better, so we should do better."

In my opinion, the use of eponyms to name birds should be terminated. Eliminating the use of honorific names would remove the need for anyone to make a judgment on what's honorable or dishonorable about another person's life. Avian species should be named based on unique characteristics of their color, anatomy, behavior, or typical habitat, etc. The American Ornithological Society's North American Classification Committee (NACC) evaluates proposals for changes to the classification and nomenclature of bird species. Based on recent decisions by the NACC, members are reluctant to conduct an objective and unbiased assessment of eponyms in bird nomenclature. In my opinion, NNYA should join other environmental groups and petition the NACC to discontinue the use of eponyms for naming birds.

"Bird Names for Birds. Because birds don't need eponymous or honorific names."

birdnamesforbirds.wordpress.com

Who Changed the Color of the Trees?

What's black and white with a yellow forehead and says "pik", "pik" and lives in that thick, gnarly, scratchy, ouchy, coniferous forest? You know the answer. It's the bird that eludes you every time you go to the Bloomingdale Bog or paddle the picturesque spruce-lined shore of Osgood Pond. You got it, it's the Black-backed Woodpecker, *Picoides arcticus*. Grab your bins and muck boots and let's try to locate this denizen of the boreal Forest. It might not be as hard as you think.

As the species name "*arcticus*" refers to its habitat of northern reaches in boreal climates, we can get a hint that this might be a challenge to view. But, it turns out this species leaves behind some very obvious signs of feeding, which, with a careful eye, we can see this unique feeding pattern on a couple boreal forest tree species, like red spruce and tamarack (or larch). I've included a couple "before and after" photos to show you the feeding sign that black-backs leave behind as they "flake" off the outermost gray bark and reveal this rust-colored under layer. We often see this as we bird these thick, conifer woods. See the "after" photo of this tamarack with its bark flaked off as the woodpecker looks for insects, eggs, or related larvae that might be overwintering in the nooks and crannies of the bark or just underneath. It is said that the woodpeckers can sense the larvae chewing and moving their way through the cambium, or growing tissue, just under the gray bark.

As the woodpeckers approach nesting time, they excavate a simple cavity into a half-living spruce or larch. But look close at the photo of the nest hole. See the rounded or beveled lower half of the hole? That's a nice little doorstep to help the male or female get a little better grip at the entrance. Often, we see the bark removed around the nest holes of black-backs and this might have a connection to similar construction we see in some southern US woodpecker species, like the red-cockaded. They deliberately cut into cambium around the hole to release sticky resin that prevents snakes from slithering into their nest holes, yikes! Is that what our black-backs are doing? My guess is they might be safe from tree-climbing snakes in the Adirondacks, but Mr. & Mrs. Black-backed better watch out for that clever red squirrel!

Brian McAllister



Before



Nest cavity



Photos: Brian McAllister

After

January 2023 Winter Birding Weekend Recap

Twelve people took part in the Winter Birding Weekend on January 28-29 co-sponsored by the Long Lake Parks and Recreation Department and Northern New York Audubon. The mixed precipitation forecast that weekend cut our group in half, but it wasn't too bad until later on Sunday! We tallied 25 species in our two morning field trips. Highlights included a foraging male Black-backed Woodpecker in N. Hudson, a foraging Pileated Woodpecker in Minerva, 10 Canada Jays in Long Lake, ~200 Bohemian Waxwings in Keene, many Evening Grosbeaks, several flocks of Pine Grosbeaks including a flock of 20 eating conifer buds in Minerva, and a solo Pine Siskin. Once again, the Adirondack Hotel in Long Lake gave us the dining room for dinner Saturday night and made everyone feel welcome.

Joan Collins



Larry Master



Betsy Miner



Larry Master

Winging it with Betsy

Even though we haven't had much of a winter, spring birding will be here before we know it. Some of my favorite birding places in the early spring and summer are campgrounds. I am a camper so I have a lot of experience with this. Early in the season, birding at Ausable Point campground is very productive. Usually, I will hear and see my first Pine Warbler of the season there. The Osprey are busy fixing up their nests and there is always waterfowl to see. One year we had a wonderful experience with Northern Shrikes there. We were hearing a vocalization that we weren't familiar with, so we followed it until we came upon a pair of Northern Shrikes that were displaying some type of mating rituals.

I live fairly close to Buck Pond campground and we start walking there as soon as the road is open. It is wonderful to hear the Loons when they come back and the first returning birds we usually see are Hermit Thrushes. Our first camping trip of the season is always at Buck Pond the weekend before Memorial Day. Last year, I was thrilled to see Bay-breasted warblers, a bird I sometimes have trouble finding. We also had Merlins nesting in a big tree on our site. They sure have a lot to say!

My knowledge of the natural world has grown due to my experiences while camping. One year, we were camping at Rollins Pond in early July, and were fortunate enough to have a Birch tree in our site that the Sapsuckers had been working on. It was amazing to see all of the birds and insects that took advantage of the Sapsucker's work. The adult Sapsucker was bringing the juvenile and showing it how to feed on the sap and insects that were attracted to the tree. Hummingbirds also visited regularly along with butterflies, bees, ants and flies. We spent hours mesmerized by the comings and goings.

This past year, again at Rollins Pond, we had a Blue-headed Vireo building a nest in our site. It was fascinating to watch the care she put into constructing the nest. She would sit in it and try it out, as if to see if it would be comfortable enough for the duration of her incubating the eggs. Then she would fly off and come back with more nest material. She had completed the nest by the time we left.

We also like to camp at Barber's Homestead Park in Westport. There is wonderful bird habitat there and it is also located on Lake Champlain. An advantage of most campgrounds is that they often contain several different habitats to be explored.

There also is nothing quite like sitting by the campfire at night and listening to Loons and Owls. I'm already looking forward to it.

Betsy Miner

Turkey Tales

Most mornings the first birds I see are our resident flock of American Wild Turkeys. Up to 30 in number, they cross the field in a grid search for food. A sentinel lags behind scanning for threats. They make their way to the apple trees hoping to find drops the deer have left behind. Then the perimeter search begins. I move to the kitchen and watch them marching single file along the edge of the woods around the back of the house. When alarmed they run in a line into the woods. Turkeys are inquisitive birds. Their heads cock as they hear me wash the dishes. Their guttural sounds indicate their awareness of our cat on the screened porch, although she doesn't present any threat. Our flock has an appetite for the rigid foam insulation on the foundation of our house. They have pecked most of it away, leaving large holes showing the watershield underneath! I'm not quite sure what they find appetizing there.

I have grown fond of these prehistoric fowl. Many people find them hideous. I am awed by the size of the toms as they display their prowess. In the fall the young males are mingling with older toms sizing up their future competition. In the spring they attempt to impress the hens who seem to ignore the display!

The chicks are precocious when they hatch, leaving the nest the first day able to feed themselves. There were two broods this spring; one hen with 9 chicks and the other with 6 two weeks later. They banded together and the hens became very protective of the young. Now they are full grown. The broods forage separately from the toms. We have watched our flock increase in numbers over the last 15 years. We estimate 30 in total.

Turkeys certainly are our most visible yard birds adding life to the woods all year long. The feathers they drop are proof of how far they roam. The next time you see a turkey take time to appreciate their quirky, inquisitive behavior as well as their innate beauty.

Marian Bodine



Marian Bodine

Field Trips

March-April-May 2023



Larry Master

Saturday, May 6, 2023

Birds, Blossoms, & Bugs

Meeting Time: 9 a.m.

Location: We will meet at Grand Lake Reserve, Parking Lot #2 (45701 Burns Rd, Theresa, NY).

To Register: Please sign up at <https://indianriverlakes.org/upcomingevents/>

Brief Description: The Indian River Lakes Conservancy will host its annual spring hike at Grand Lake Reserve; the hike will be led by Clarkson Professor of Biology, Dr. Tom Langen. The Grand Lake Reserve presents a spectacular landscape, rich with biological diversity, rugged geography, and beautiful scenery and spring is a magnificent time to behold the abundance of life there. This hike will highlight the diversity of species present on the preserve this time of year including Golden-Winged Warblers, Eastern Towhees, Baltimore Orioles, Trillium, Dogwood, and American Toads.

Sunday, May 7, 2023

Peak Spring Migration in Grasslands, Forest & Marsh

Meeting Time: 8 a.m. (until 11 a.m.)

Location: Middle Lake access road off CR 14 (about 2 miles down CR 14 from the intersection with Route 68 toward Rensselaer Falls).

To Register: Please e-mail the St. Lawrence Land Trust with your interest and how many plan to join (stlawlandtrust@stlawlandtrust.org).

Brief Description: NNYA board member Dr. Tom Langen will lead a Spring migration bird walk at Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area outside Canton. This WMA is recognized as an Important Bird Area, and has high diversity of bird species typical of the St. Lawrence Valley, including several that are considered species of greatest conservation need such as Golden-winged Warbler, Bobolink, and Black Tern. We will walk the Middle Lake access road. To ensure all can hear and the birds aren't disturbed, the walk is limited to 15 people. The walk is flat and about a mile long each way (2 miles roundtrip).

Sunday, May 7, 2023

Point au Roche State Park

Meeting Time: 8:30 a.m.

Location: Deep Bay Parking Lot, Point au Roche State Park. The intersection of Route 9 and Point au Roche Road is 5 miles north of Plattsburgh and 7 miles south of Chazy. From Exit 40 on the Northway, the intersection with Point au Roche Road is one half mile south on Route 9.

The Point au Roche State Park sign is 1.5 miles from the Route 9 intersection with Point au Roche Road. This entrance is used for the beach and boat ramp. Continue on Point au Roche Road another half mile east to the intersection with Camp Red Cloud Road (across from Point au Roche Lodge). Note the sign for Point au Roche Outdoor Interpretive Center (87 Camp Red Cloud Road). Turn right onto Camp Red Cloud Road. Deep Bay can be seen at the end of Camp Red Cloud Road.

Bring: Binoculars, camera, snack, water, lunch, insect repellent, sunscreen

To Register: Email: kenneth.adams@plattsburgh.edu Cell phone (518) 569-2855

Brief Description: This 850-acre "Wildlife Park" features many habitats including rocky peninsula shoreline (6 ac) and sand beach (2 ac) on Lake Champlain; old field and shrubland (410 ac); forest and woodland (250 ac); cropland (105 ac); picnic area and ballfield (50 ac); swamp (10 ac); emergent marsh and pond (10 ac). Point au Roche State Park is one of Clinton County's birding hotspots; 180 species have been recorded on the eBird list for the Park. Springtime eBird lists include Osprey, Eastern Towhee, Marsh Wren, Brown Thrasher, American Redstart, Baltimore Oriole, Great Crested Flycatcher, five species of sparrows, three species of woodpeckers, and four warbler species. Ken Adams and Judy Heintz will co-lead this field trip. The planned route is the level terrain on Long Point peninsula (about 2 miles round trip) and for those who would like to continue birding, Ram's Head peninsula (about two miles round trip). A stop at the beach is another option. Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Group size limited to 15.

Field Trips, cont.

March-April-May 2023

Saturday, May 13, 2023

Cedarland Boy scout camp to Grampus Lake CE (NY Breeding Bird Atlas Block)

Meeting Time: 7:30 a.m.

Location: Stewart's in Long Lake

To Register: Contact Tom Wheeler northflow@gmail.com if you would like to participate.

Brief Description: New York State has acquired easements that permit hiking on some of the trails of the Cedarland Boy Scout camp parcel. One of the trails eventually reaches Grampus Lake CE which is otherwise off limits. We will meet in Long Lake at Stewarts and then proceed to the parking area. The trail leads up to a mountain summit (Rock Pond Mountain) and passes by McRorie Lake. The atlas block is reached after several miles near the north end of McRorie Lake. There should be a good variety of warblers and other migrants demonstrating breeding behaviors. As a major purpose is atlas information, the pace will be quite moderate.

Saturday, May 20, 2023

Bird Walk along the CATS Art Farm Trail

Meeting time: 8:00 am

Location: CATS Art Farm Trailhead along Walker Rd outside the hamlet of Wadhams.

Bring: Water and bug spray and appropriate footwear... preferably waterproof

To Register: Email Stacy Robinson maplemeadows@hotmail.com

Brief Description: Join a NNY Audubon sponsored walk when songbird migration is in full swing. We'll explore the habitats along this lovely CATS trail which includes fields, woodlands, and wetlands. An approx. 2 mile walk over fairly easy terrain that might have some wet spots. The attached checklist includes birds we may encounter. <https://ebird.org/atlasny/checklist/S110364200>

Open to all but limited to 15 persons.

Saturday, May 20, 2023

Lake Adirondack Woodland and Waterfowl

MeetingTime: 7 a.m.

Location: Meet at the Indian Lake Public Library

Bring: Drinks and snacks, bug spray, sunscreen, waterproof footwear and binoculars.

To Register: Contact Mike Moccio at mjmoccio@gmail.com

Description: 3-4 hour walk along the back end of the lake. Woodland on one side and lake edges on the other. Variety of warblers, thrushes, vireos, loons, etc.

Saturday, May 27, 2023

Streeter Lake and Oswegatchie SE (NY Breeding Bird Atlas Block)

Meeting Time: 7:30 a.m.

Location: Meet in Star Lake at the gas station.

To Register: Contact Tom Wheeler northflow@gmail.com if you would like to participate.

Description: This is a block with very interesting habitat as much of it was formerly potato fields. Now part of the forest preserve, much of this area was formerly a private estate of Andrew Schuler who produced potatoes for his potato chip business. The block features a variety of habitats and we will explore both the road within the block and the trails including a visit to the Schuler mausoleum, a fairly unique item to be found in the forest preserve. Depending on time we may also proceed further south to locate the famous great corner where three counties and several great land grants have a common corner with a monument erected by Verplanck Colvin.



Larry Master

Northern New York Audubon Newsletter

Welcome new members!

Richard Arnold
Jeffrey & Ella Cashman
Frederick Cliff
Danielle Garneau
Anita & Lemuel Hegwood
Patricia Lennox
Lynne Matott
Stella Miller
Marilyn Smith
Diana Strablow
William Tribou
Teri White
Erin Wiley
Natalee Wrege
Edmund Zysik

**To renew or to become a
member, please visit
[https://www.NNYA.org/
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Larry Master

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