



# Northern New York Audubon

Sept - Nov 2022 Newsletter

Volume 50, Issue 3

## Dear Friends,

Grab your binoculars, pack your lunch, call a friend and get ready for a very full fall line up of great birding events! Details can be found on pages 5, 6 and 7. Be sure to register for each event by contacting the trip leader and please consider saving this newsletter for future reference. In addition to great trips, Northern New York Audubon is organizing a presentation titled 'Food and Feathers' in October and we will be on site in Malone in early November for the annual Snow Goose migration. Information for events will be posted on the NNYA Facebook page.

We are extremely pleased to announce the addition of three new members to our board! Ken Adams, Mary Beth Warburton and Mikayla Ploof are new Directors with terms ending in 2025. Liz DeFonce continues as Treasurer with a term ending in 2024. And, a big thank you to Russ DeFonce, whose term ended in June, for all of his years of service on the board.

As you will see, our board has been very active over the past few months. We received seven excellent Cullman grant applications this spring and awarded a total of \$12,800 in grant awards; NNYA staffed a table at the Great Adirondack Bird Celebration at the Paul Smith's College VIC in June; we launched our brand new farm grant program in July with a successful fundraiser at Hex and Hop Brewing; and our board and a group of our intrepid members were delighted by an excellent morning of birding followed by our annual meeting and a great presentation by Stacy McNulty in early August.

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."

### This issue:

#### Farm Grant Program

Page 2

#### Cullman Grant Recipients

Page 3

#### Those Artful Milkweeds!

Pages 3 and 4

#### Winging it with Betsy

Page 4

#### Trips, Forays & Presentations

Pages 5, 6 & 7

#### Bird Foods

Page 6

#### Recap: Annual Meeting

Page 7

## Calling all Members!

NNYA is running a 'renew your membership' event! The fifteenth current or lapsed member to renew in the month of September will receive a free NNYA hat or our fabulous Spruce Grouse t-shirt.

Get going!

Visit [nnya@nnya.org](mailto:nnya@nnya.org) to renew today!



Andy Foster



## Farm Grant Program Kick off - Summer 2022!

Northern New York Audubon is excited to introduce our brand-new Farm Grant Program, which will locally address the intersectionality of bird conservation and agriculture by funding bird-friendly projects on farms within our territory. Globally, agriculture contributes significantly to climate change and biodiversity loss, and the birds that rely on those open and managed habitats (grassland and shrubland birds) have suffered the greatest losses when compared to birds in any other North American habitat.



Female Bobolink, Photo: Hyla Howe

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Northern New York Audubon  
Executive Board

Catherine Smith - Co President  
Janet Mihuc - Co President  
Shelly Cihan - Vice President  
Liz DeFonce – Treasurer  
Kristel Guimara – Secretary

### Board Members

Ken Adams  
Jeff Biby  
Mar Bodine  
Joan Collins  
Hyla Howe  
Tom Langen  
Betsy Miner  
Mikayla Ploof  
Mary Beth Warburton  
John Thaxton,  
(Director Emeritus)  
Pat Thaxton,  
(Director Emeritus)

This is an exciting opportunity for our members as well as for the greater community. Most grassland and shrubland habitat is on privately owned and managed lands which birders are not able to access unless they receive landowner permission. We believe that this also leads to underreporting of certain species on eBird, furthering the inaccurate belief that grassland and shrubland birds don't have a place historically in the Northeast and don't require the same conservation effort as alpine, boreal, and interior forest birds. After receiving funding to implement projects, we will ask that each farm allows us to lead a bird walk on their property so our members can learn about the farm, the project, and enjoy the birding that the property has to offer. We hope that you join us on these walks to learn about the unique habitats that farming can create in our region, and the birds that use them.

We kicked off the Farm Grant with a trivia event at Hex and Hop Brewing in Bloomingdale on July 13. The event was a huge success, raising \$1,185 for the Farm Grant. A special thanks to Cape Air, who donated a pair of round-trip tickets for our raffle, and to everyone who came and donated! Congratulations to Denise K. from Saranac Lake, who won the round-trip tickets. Denise, a strong supporter of NNYA and our new Farm Grant, shared "We are so excited to have had this opportunity to support the farm grant and our local community. Having a chance to soar like the birds above the Adirondacks by winning this raffle is a bonus! We are looking forward to the next event, to continue to support this cause."



Hyla Howe



Stacy McNulty presenting at the 2022 NNYA annual meeting  
Photo: Joan Collins

## Those Artful Milkweeds!

When most people think of milkweeds (*Asclepias spp.*) it's probably in the context of monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) caterpillars eating milkweed leaves. But the relationships between milkweeds and insects are fascinating in many other ways. Many kinds of insects seek the nectar in milkweed flowers as a food source. Two species of milkweeds in our area (common milkweed, *Asclepias syriaca*, and swamp milkweed, *A. incarnata*) are important nectar sources for a wide variety of insects including butterflies, beetles, bees, and wasps.

## 2022 Cullman Grant Recipients

Since 2008, the generosity of the Cullman Foundation, with additional support for Northern New York Audubon (NNYA), has made it possible for NNYA to distribute funding of up to \$2500 for projects beneficial to bird species or promoting the enjoyment of birds in the NNYA region. The NNYA Cullman Grants support research on the natural history and conservation of birds in northeastern New York, and education and outreach activities that increase public awareness and appreciation of birds and their habitat. This year we had seven excellent applications, and were able to fund each for a total of \$12,800. These worthy projects include:

- Adirondack Land Trust, for 'Adirondack Birding for All'
- Hamilton County Tourism, for the keynote speaker at the Adirondack Birding Festival
- SUNY ESF Adirondack Ecological Center, for 'Supporting the Next Generation of Loon Conservation Scientists and Stewards'
- Adirondack Watershed Institute, for 'Wool and Water: The Bird Edition'
- SUNY ESF, for 'Songbird Habitat Rehabilitation in Managed Northern Hardwood Forests'
- University of Maine, for 'Estimating Golden-winged Warbler annual survival on Fort Drum, NY'
- Ausable River Association, for 'Improving Streamside Plantings to Enhance Songbird Habitat'

NNYA is proud of this program. In coming newsletters, we will highlight the outcomes of some of these projects. We are grateful to the Cullman Foundation, and for you as a NNYA member, for the funds that support this program.

As adult insects move about on flowers in search of nectar, they collect pollen (the flower's male reproductive cells) on their bodies and while moving from flower to flower they transport pollen to the female reproductive parts of another flower. This is the basic way insect-pollinated plants produce seeds.

In most flowering plants, pollen grains are loose and collect on the bodies of insects as they forage for nectar. Milkweeds, however, have evolved a much more intricate insect pollination system. Rather than producing loose pollen, milkweeds produce their pollen grains in small sacs called pollinia. Pollinia consist of a pair of pollen sacs connected by a yoke-shaped structure.

Milkweed flowers are designed to attract insects with their abundant nectar and these insects are used to carrying pollinia from flower to flower. Milkweed flowers are arranged in umbels and each flower has a star-shaped corona with five hoods which produce nectar. Between each hood is a slit-like opening (pollination aperture) with a pollen sac on either side (see photo).



Common Milkweed flower showing the hoods and pollination aperture.  
Photo: Chris Helzer/The Nature Conservancy

## Those Artful Milkweeds!, cont.

Each milkweed flower has five pollinia. As insects feed on milkweed nectar, their legs move up and down. If an insect's leg slides into one of the slit-like openings, the upward leg movement will extract a pollinium by pulling on the yoke-shaped filaments that connect two pollen sacs. Pollinia-laden insects then move to another flower, and using the same leg movements, insert pollinia into another slit-like opening (pollination aperture). Once inside, pollen grains develop and fertilize eggs in the flower's ovary. By late summer, the ovary will ripen into the well-known milkweed pod containing dozens of tufted seeds ready to be dispersed by the wind.

Ken Adams



Milkweed pollinia  
USGS Bee Inventory & Monitoring Lab



Early season monarch caterpillar on milkweed flower  
C. Smith

## Winging it with Betsy

Norman Ridge Road in Vermontville is a very special place. I am fortunate to live just a few minutes away and it is our favorite evening dog walking location. The sunsets in August and September are spectacular. As with many locations that a birder visits frequently, there are species that you expect to see and some that come as a surprise.

In the spring, I usually see my first Vesper Sparrows of the year gitting along the side of the road. As spring progresses the grassland birds return. American Kestrel, Bobolinks and Savannah Sparrows all nest there. There are fewer and fewer places to see and hear Bobolinks so these fields are important habitat for them. The owners of Norman Ridge Farmstead are doing their best to provide habitat when possible. You also find Tree and Barn Swallows nesting there. Often in the evening I will see a Northern Harrier hunting low over the fields. I suspect they nest there but I can't confirm that. Spring is always an exciting time to bird, wondering each day what you might find. One year I saw 13- American Kestrels on my way home from work . This year I had a Killdeer and Brown Thrasher. There are usually a few days when a couple of the fields are filled with Blackbirds migrating through. Red-Winged Blackbirds, Brown-Headed Cowbirds and Grackles.

Summer is very active with nesting. Lately, the numbers of birds have exploded as many young have fledged and are hanging around in family groups now. I recently counted around 75-100 Savannah Sparrows along the road and saw several groups of Bobolinks flying together in the fields. I am sure there are more that I couldn't see from the road. Mid-summer, the American Goldfinches are nesting. Since they are strictly seed eaters they wait until there are plenty of seeds available to feed their young.

Late summer is my dog Bear's favorite time of year. The Crickets are out and he loves to chase and eat them as I am trying to walk him. Fun for him, not so much for me.

Fall provides more opportunities to catch migrating birds. I am sure there are birds in the winter but I am not there too much. With those large open fields and being higher in elevation, the wind can be significant. Driving through in the winter I have seen field birds such as Snow Buntings and Horned Larks.

Norman Ridge can be enjoyed in all seasons. As always, please be respectful of private property.

Betsy Miner

# Trips, Forays and Presentations

**Friday, September 9, 2022**

## **Point au Roche State Park**

**Meeting Time:** 9 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, snacks, water, lunch, insect repellent, sunscreen

**To Register:** Email: [kenneth.adams@plattsburgh.edu](mailto:kenneth.adams@plattsburgh.edu), Cell phone (518) 569-2855

**Brief Description:** This 850-acre “Wildlife Park” features many ecological habitats including sand beach (2 ac) and rocky peninsula shoreline (6 ac) on Lake Champlain; old fields and shrublands (410 ac); forests and woodlands (250 ac); cropland (105 ac); playground and ballfields (50 ac); swamps (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. Fall eBird lists include Osprey, Northern Harrier, Wood Duck, Mallard, Common Loon, Semipalmated Plover, Field Sparrow, Pine Siskin, Eastern Towhee, Cedar Waxwing, Scarlet Tanager, Blackpoll Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Northern Parula, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets.

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.

**Saturday, September 10, 10:00am**

## **Mushroom and Botany Foray at Wanakena**

**Meeting Time:** 10:00 am

**Meeting Location:** Moore Trail, Wanakena, NY. Directions: drive south from Route 3, on Route 61 into Wanakena, keep right at the “Welcome to Wanakena” sign. Parking lot is on the right next to the car bridge by Oswegatchie River. Limited parking so please park only on the west side of the road.

**Bring:** Hand lens if you have one

**To Register:** Bernie Carr, [mycocarex@hotmail.com](mailto:mycocarex@hotmail.com)

**Brief Description:** Explore the world of fungus and late summer plants in an Adirondack woods with leaders Bernie Carr and Brian McAllister.

# Trips, Forays and Presentations, cont.

**Saturday, September 17, 2022**

## **Birding Crown Point in the Champlain Valley**

**Meeting Time:** 8:30 am

**Meeting Location:** Join Jeff Biby and Brian McAllister at Crown Point State Historic Site

**Bring:** Binoculars, lunch, snack, water, sunblock, hat, comfortable walking shoes (about a 1.5-mile walk)

**To Register:** Contact Brian McAllister [birder64@yahoo.com](mailto:birder64@yahoo.com)

**Brief Description:** Fall migration will be in full swing! Shorebirds, late fall warblers, waterfowl, raptors, and migrating woodland species are all possibilities! Relaxed-pace walk so we get every bird! Plan for 4 hours of birding.

**Friday, October 7, 2022**

## **'Food and Feathers' Presentation**

**Time:** 6:30 pm

**Location:** Paul Smith's College VIC

**To Register:** No registration is required.

**Brief Description:** Lisa Kiziuk, Director of Bird Conservation, and Fred deLong, Director of Community Agriculture of Willistown Conservation Trust will describe how they integrate growing food for humans while providing habitat for surrounding wildlife at Rushton Preserve, PA. By combining land protection and environmental stewardship strategies with regenerative agricultural practices, Rushton Farm and Preserve serves as a hugely successful model for bird friendly farming.

**Tuesday, October 11, 2022**

## **Azure Mountain Hawk Watch**

**Meeting Time:** 7:00 am

**Meeting Location:** Meet at Azure Mountain Trailhead off of Blue Mountain Road (7 miles south of Rt. 458)

**Bring:** Binoculars, water to stay hydrated, and appropriate apparel and footwear for a mountain hike

**To Register:** Contact Rich Hanlon at 412-992-6648 or [RichHanlon7@gmail.com](mailto:RichHanlon7@gmail.com)

**Brief Description:** Hike to the top of Azure Mountain. Take some time to do some hawk-watching once we get there. This is a strenuous one-mile uphill hike. Expect this outing to last 5 hours.

**November/date to be determined**

## **Snow Goose Migration Watch**

**Brief Description:** Join us as we watch thousands of snow geese and other waterfowl fly into Rotary Lake for the evening! Please check the NNYA Facebook page for additional information. Bring binoculars!

## **Bird Foods**



*Viburnum cassinoides*  
Photo: A. Foster

Migrating birds need antioxidants, energy, fat and protein. Native viburnum fruits are excellent sources of nutrition as well as antioxidants.

Can't find native plants? Please contact us at [nnya@nnya.org](mailto:nnya@nnya.org) for a list of regional suppliers.



NY State Young Birders Club calling in the Jays!  
Photo: Joan Collins

# Trips, Forays and Presentations, cont.

**Tuesday, November 29, 2022** (rain date November 30)

## Car-Birding in Jefferson Co. (Point Peninsula and Cape Vincent)

**Meeting Time:** 7 am

**Meeting Location:** Sunoco Station (Subway inside) at 12345 East Main St., Chaumont, NY

**Bring:** Binoculars, scope if you have one, food and water, and appropriate apparel and footwear for late November conditions.

**To Register:** Contact Joan Collins at 315-244-7127 or [JoanCollins@ADKAvian.com](mailto:JoanCollins@ADKAvian.com)

**Brief Description:** Join Mary Beth Warburton and Joan Collins for a car-birding trip in west-central Jefferson County including Point Peninsula and Cape Vincent. We will be watching for “wintering” birds – owls, hawks, Northern Shrikes, waterfowl, and more, plus migrating waterfowl in the sheltered bays around peninsulas along northern Lake Ontario. Joan and Mary Beth plan to spend the night in the area the night before to watch for owls at sunset – let us know if you’d like to join us the night before the trip.

## Recap: Annual Outing & Meeting - August 6, 2022

The weather for the Annual Outing the morning of August 6 was hot and humid, but fortunately started out cool at dawn. Quite a few people joined the optional 6 am start at Shaw Pond in Long Lake before meeting at Overlook Park in Newcomb for the main field trip. We stopped at Hyslop Marsh along Route 28N in Newcomb to start, hiked the rail bed (south) a short distance in Minerva, and hiked the Roosevelt Truck Trail (south end) about a half-mile before heading back to the Overlook Park Pavilion for lunch/meeting/presentation. Birding was terrific and we tallied 55 species during the morning!

After lunch at the Overlook Park Pavilion in Newcomb, Janet Mihuc (co-President of NNYA), gave an update on Northern New York Audubon’s activities. Janet then introduced the speaker: Stacy McNulty, Associate Director and Research Associate of the Adirondack Ecological Center in Newcomb. Stacy and her colleagues gave an interesting update on research and stewardship projects at the Adirondack Ecological Center.

Thanks to all who attended! Joan Collins



Red Crossbill

Photo: Mikayla Ploof

## Highlights from the Annual Meeting:

Wood Duck - Shaw Pond and Rail Bed  
American Black Duck - Shaw Pond  
Ring-necked Duck - 2 (male and female at Shaw Pond)  
Pied-billed Grebe - Feeding young on Shaw Pond!  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird - Several along the Rail Bed  
Virginia Rail - 2 - vocalizing at Shaw Pond  
Spotted Sandpiper - Rail Bed  
American Bittern - Singing at Shaw Pond & 2 different flying birds along the Rail Bed  
Great Blue Heron - Shaw Pond  
Sharp-shinned Hawk - At least 2 young along the Roosevelt Truck Trail  
Broad-winged Hawk - Vocalizing at Hyslop Marsh & perched bird in parking area of Roosevelt Truck Trail  
Belted Kingfisher - Male Shaw Pond (harassing Merlin!)  
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - juvenile at Hyslop Marsh  
Black-backed Woodpecker - calling at Hyslop Marsh  
Northern Flicker - Shaw Pond  
Pileated Woodpecker - Shaw Pond & Hyslop Marsh  
Merlin - Female at Shaw Pond being chased by a Belted Kingfisher!  
Olive-sided Flycatcher - at least 2 along the Rail Bed  
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher - calling from forest across Shaw Pond  
Alder Flycatcher - Singing and calling at Hyslop Marsh and Rail Bed  
Least Flycatcher - Singing at the Rail Bed  
Boreal Chickadee - at least 3 at the Rail Bed with views!  
Winter Wren - Several calling  
Hermit Thrush - Singing at Hyslop Marsh & Rail Bed  
Red Crossbill - Family group at the Rail Bed with wonderful views - feeding young and drinking at the edge of the marsh!  
Northern Waterthrush - Several singing at Shaw Pond at dawn!  
Northern Parula - Rail Bed  
Black-throated Blue Warbler - Male observed along the Roosevelt Truck Trail  
Canada Warbler - 2 singing birds at Hyslop Marsh!  
Indigo Bunting - Singing at Overlook Park

# Northern New York Audubon Newsletter

## **A Note About Membership**

Our work would not be possible without the support of our Members.

So - a heartfelt

**Thank You!**

to all of you who generously support NNYA!



Ellie George

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