

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 36 Number 3

September-November 2008



**Northern New York Audubon Speaker
 Saturday, November 8, 2008 at 1 p.m.
 “Resource Exploitation, Finch Nesting Events and a
 Closer Look at Red
 Crossbill Vocal Types in NY”
 The Wild Center in Tupper Lake
 Speaker: Matt Young**

Matthew A. Young has lived in Central New York the past 12 years and now resides in Scott, NY (Cortland County). Matt received his B.S. in Water Resources from SUNY Oneonta and his M.S. in Environmental Forest Biology (concentration in Ornithology) from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry in 2003. Matt did his masters research at The Great Swamp Conservancy near Canastota, which is now recognized as an Audubon Important Bird Area, and has helped the Cornell Plantations, Finger Lakes Land Trust and Save the County Land Trust acquire unique bird and plant habitat in CNY. He is a Kingbird Regional Editor and sits on the Board of Directors at Lime Hollow Nature Center and Save the County Land Trust. He recently left his position as Adjunct Professor in Environmental Studies at SUNY Cortland in order to accept a job in the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds as an Audio Production Engineer at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. He wrote the finch (i.e. crossbills) species accounts for the *Atlas Of Breeding Birds in New York State*, which is due for release in the fall of 2008, and his research interests involve the study of Red Crossbill vocal types.

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Red Crossbills Photos by Larry Master

NNYAS

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Northern New York Audubon Society, Inc.
A chapter of National Audubon Society
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Sunday, September 7, 2008 Noblewood Willsboro (Essex Co.)

Participants will watch for migrant shorebirds and waterfowl, as well as local breeders like wood duck and Caspian tern, where the Bouquet River empties into Lake Champlain along the northern border of this gorgeous park.. Bring your binoculars and scope if you have one.

Time: 8 a.m.

Location: Meet at the entrance to Noblewood

Leader: Melanie McCormack

Register by calling Melanie at (518) 312-6123 or email:

mruddyduck@aol.com

Saturday, September 13, 2008 Bloomingdale Bog St. Armand (Franklin & Essex Counties)

Participants will hike several miles on level terrain on the old railroad bed that runs through Bloomingdale Bog. Watch for boreal birds, like gray jay and black-backed woodpecker and, this year, the possibility of Red and White-winged Crossbills. The foliage in bogs tends to turn earlier than less wet places, so get ready for some blasts of color.

Time: 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Location: Meet at the north end trailhead parking area along Route 55 (Gabriels-Bloomingdale Rd.)

Bring: Water, food, binoculars, and appropriate clothing.

Leaders: Brian McAllister & Mary Beth Warburton

Register by calling Brian at (518) 637-1773 or email

birder64@yahoo.com

White-winged Crossbill Larry Master



Sunday, September 14, 2008
Whiteface Mountain (via toll road)
Wilmington (Essex Co.)

September can be a great month to see and hear Bicknell's Thrush as the young practice their songs, and family groups are less secretive. At this time of year, the foliage and views should be spectacular!

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Meet at the toll gate.

Leader: Larry Master

Register by calling Larry Master at (518) 523-2214 or email larry@masterimages.org. Trip is weather dependent, so please check with Larry in the morning.



Red Crossbill Larry Master

Sunday September 21, 2008
Ausable Marsh
Peru (Clinton Co.)

This location, where the Ausable River empties into Lake Champlain, offers terrific opportunities to observe birds, from migrating shorebirds and waterfowl to migrating raptors and passerines to local breeders who stay here all year. The habitats here include lakeshore, woods, marsh and river.

Time: 8 a.m.

Location: Meet at the parking area just before the campground entrance.

Leader: Melanie McCormack

Register by calling Melanie at (518) 312-6123 or email mruddyduck@aol.com

Sunday, October 5, 2008
Leonard Pond Trail
Colton (St. Lawrence Co.)

Participants will hike 5 miles round-trip on a wide, level trail in mixed forest and boreal habitat. If there is interest, we can add on a bushwhack to Chandler Pond. Watch for woodland birds, migrants, and boreal species, including the possibility of Red and White-winged Crossbills.

Time: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Location: Meet at the trailhead on Route 56 (2.5 miles north of the Route 3-Route 56 intersection)

Leaders: Peter O'Shea & Joan Collins

Register by calling Joan at (315) 261-4246 or email jcollins@twcny.rr.com



American Golden Plover Larry Master

Saturday, November 1, 2008
Wilson Hill to Robert Moses State Park
Louisville & Massena (St. Lawrence Co.)

Participants will stop at several locations along the St. Lawrence River to watch for migrating waterfowl traveling along the river and its valley. We might also see some later migrants such as rough-legged hawks and eagles.

Time: 9 a.m.

Location: Call the leader for meeting location

Leaders: Eileen Wheeler & Mary Beth Warburton

Register by calling Eileen at (315) 386-2482 or email eiwheeler@yahoo.com

All photographs this issue by Larry Master

Crown Point Banding Station

The spring bird banding station on the grounds of the Crown Point State Historic Site opened for the 33rd consecutive season of banding between May 9-26, 2008. Operated by the Crown Point Banding Association, through an agreement with NYS OPR&HP and the Historic Site Manager, the station is located in hawthorn thickets west of His Majesty's Fort at Crown Point. Birds banded this year were:

4 Killdeer; 1 Downy Woodpecker; 1 Northern Flicker; 1 Yellow-bellied Flycatcher; 1 "Traill's" Flycatcher; 3 Least Flycatcher; 2 Great Crested Flycatcher; 2 Eastern Kingbird; 1 Warbling Vireo; 2 Red-eyed Vireo; 42 Blue Jay; 3 Tree Swallow; 15 Barn Swallow; 9 Black-capped Chickadee; 4 House Wren; 4 Ruby-crowned Kinglet; 3 Veery; 2 Swainson's Thrush; 2 Wood Thrush; 20 American Robin; 37 Gray Catbird; 1 Brown Thrasher; 12 Yellow Warbler; 2 Chestnut-sided Warbler; 2 Magnolia Warbler; 1 Black-throated Blue Warbler; 52 Yellow-rumped Warbler; 6 "Western" Palm Warbler; 1 Blackpoll Warbler; 8 American Redstart; 1 Ovenbird; 1 Northern Waterthrush; 24 Common Yellowthroat; 1 Wilson's Warbler; 5 Chipping Sparrow; 4 Field Sparrow; 1 Savannah Sparrow; 6 Song Sparrow; 5 Lincoln's Sparrow; 5 White-throated Sparrow; 4 White-crowned Sparrow; 2 Northern Cardinal; 1 Rose-breasted Grosbeak; 2 Indigo Bunting; 2 Bobolink; 2 Red-winged Blackbird; 10 Common Grackle; 2 Brown-headed Cowbird; 16 Baltimore Oriole; 44 American Goldfinch. TOTAL: 384 individuals of 51 species.

There were also a record 45 returns of a dozen species banded at Crown Point in previous years, the oldest a Common Grackle now six years, 11 months old. Notable species seen or heard, but not banded, included late Snow Goose, 15 Turkey Vultures feeding on dead alewives, seven migrant Bald Eagles, calling Whip-poor-will, and a leucistic American Robin. There was a strong return flight of Blue Jays, although short of the 89 jays banded in 2005.

A major criterion for naming Crown Point SHS not only an Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA), but also a New York State Bird Conservation Area (BCA), was the congregations of birds that gather at the tip of Crown Point peninsula. Under one set of criteria, these consist of at least 2,000 waterfowl, including such birds as cormorants. For many years, large numbers of Double-crested Cormorants have gathered on the west spit in Bulwagga Bay, just below the banding station. They nested there in 2002 (three nests) and '03 (16 nests), an apparent result of the onset of "control" operations in Vermont. There has been no subsequent nesting attempted for five years.

Cormorant Control

On 12 May there were 160 cormorants-- adults and subadults-- sunning on the spit and diving for invasive alewives, while Turkey Vultures and Common Grackles cleaned the beaches of dead fish. At 9:10 a.m. the following day, a NYS DEC boat arrived and two men began shooting. They killed a reported 69 cormorants on 13 May, collecting carcasses in large bags.

The DEC returned for longer periods on following days, their heavy shotgun fire difficult to explain to groups of adjudicated youth visiting the banding station on 16 May and

sixth graders on 21 May. Sport radios used at the station picked up conversations about shooting "hangers" and "flopers" (cripples), followed by live shots from the bay below, the students asking why they were doing this, even to the wounded, and why we couldn't stop them, until the banders could break in and radio a request that the killing team switch to another channel.

Adult visitors were astounded to hear the shooting and learn that the killing of these native birds was allowed on an IBA and BCA. By late May, flights of cormorants heading east to Vermont signaled the approach of the DEC boats across the bay, and on 20 May the number of cormorants gathered at the spit had reached 200. Similar "control" shooting is being done on both NY & VT sides of Champlain, including The Four Brothers bird sanctuary, another Audubon IBA, oiling eggs there as well. Meanwhile, the beaches are covered with dead alewives, a recent invasive in the lake and now a favored dietary staple of cormorants on Lake Champlain. Go figure.

We're grateful to those who helped transport the banding station: Malinda Chapman & family of Ticonderoga, Stan Corneille of Williamstown, VT, Gordon Howard of Keeseville & Clemson, SC, Dan Lee of Ironville, Gary Lee of Inlet, and Bob Wei of Keene Valley & Upper Saddle River, NJ.

Special thanks go to Historic Site Manager Thomas Hughes, Jake Putnam, and the rest of the Crown Point staff for their continued cooperation and many kindnesses. We greatly appreciate the interest in habitat maintenance of Matt Medler, Pam Otis, Ray Perry, and Melissa Lemens from OPR&HP in Albany. Since 1976, a total of 14,982 birds have been banded on the grounds of Crown Point State Historic Site, and we hope to return to band #15,000 during our 34th year in 2009

—Mike Peterson,
Elizabethtown & Montréal

President's Message

While we have grown our membership by merging HPAS and SLAA, I would characterize our demographic as middle aged to "mature". I would like to focus some effort on recruiting new and younger members into conservation and into the organization. I am hoping that with the abundance of colleges in our region and the number of children, nieces, nephews and grandchildren we must have out there, we should be able to find a way to appeal to this younger demographic. We've made a great start by purchasing binoculars for Indian Creek Nature Center which is visited by a host of grammar school children every year. I would like to continue this by NNYA sponsoring an event at an area College or encouraging members to bring a young person on one of our many field trips this fall. We could also create a brochure aimed at this generation along with updating our web site to appeal to this younger crowd. I would welcome ideas as to how this organization can continue to grow and ensure that the next generation has an interest in conservation issues.

—Charlotte Demers

Annual Outing/Meeting '08

The sixty percent chance of showers and thunder-showers notwithstanding, twenty-five or so NNYAS members and board members gathered at Indian Creek Nature Center, where we hiked on beautifully maintained trails and a boardwalk through shrubland, wetlands, marsh and forest habitats. We had an excellent look, through spotting scopes and binoculars, at an alder flycatcher and several good looks at black terns.

Over lunch beneath the Nature Center's pavilion we installed our two new board members, Leslie Karasin, of The Wildlife Conservation Society, and Melanie McCormack, a former HPAS board member and birder extraordinaire. Then, as the sky steadily darkened, President Charlotte Demers reached into a bag of raffle ticket stubs and pulled out the winner of a two-day, all-expenses-paid stay at Elk Lake Lodge—Bill Johnson, of Upper Jay, New York.

When the sky really started getting dark and the sound of distant thunder to the south crescendoed, we took a quick drive to the steel observation tower overlooking Lower Lake, where we looked at assorted waterfowl through light to medium rain. And when I thought I saw a distant flash of lightning in the corner of my eye, I suggested it might perhaps prove wise to get the heck off the lightning rod of a tower we stood on looking at birds.

A few hard core NNYASers went to another part of the lake and spent forty minutes or so trying to identify a grebe that just didn't seem to fit its description, until someone got a flash of a crest and called it an immature hooded merganser.

--JT



Sanderling Larry Master



Lesser Yellowlegs Larry Master

Poetry Corner

Another Time

For us like any other fugitive,
Like the numberless flowers that cannot number
And all the beasts that need not remember,
It is today in which we live.

So many try to say Not Now,
So many have forgotten how
To say I Am, and would be
Lost, if they could, in history.

Bowing, for instance, with such old-world grace
To a proper flag in a proper place,
Muttering like ancients as they stump upstairs
Of Mine and His or Ours and Theirs.

Just as if time were what they used to will
When it was gifted with possession still,
Just as if they were wrong
In no more wishing to belong.

No wonder then so many die of grief,
So many are so lonely as they die;
No one has yet believed or liked a lie,
Another time has other lives to live.

--W.H. Auden



Killdeer Larry Master

NABA's 2008 Lake Placid Butterfly Count

This year's count was held on July 15th. It had been delayed for several days due to uncooperative weather, which persisted throughout most of July and August. We tallied 26 species, which is about average for this count, but whether it was because of the unusually warm couple of April weeks, perhaps causing early emergence of particular species or the persistent rains in June and July, we recorded the lowest number of individual butterflies in the census' fifteen-year history. Of interest was a Silver-bordered Fritillary, which was observed in a field abutting Adirondack Loj Road. This butterfly is usually found in wet areas but can sometimes be seen nectaring in fields with Meadow Fritillaries.

Species List: Canadian Tiger Swallowtail 13, Cabbage White 20, Orange Sulphur 5, Clouded Sulphur 6, Bog Copper 3, Striped Hairstreak 2, Great Spangled Fritillary 9, Atlantis Fritillary 20, Silver Bordered Fritillary 1, Meadow Fritillary 2, Northern Crescent 1, Eastern Comma 3, Gray Comma 1, Mourning Cloak 1, Milbert's Tortoiseshell 1, White Admiral 16, Viceroy 1, Northern Pearly-eye 4, Eyed-brown 6, Common Wood Nymph 2, Monarch 39, European Skipper 2, Least Skipper 1, Peck's Skipper 8, Long Dash 3, Dun Skipper 4.

Participants: Dick Gershon, Leslie Gershon, Ted Mack, Lew Rosenberg, Sheila Rosenberg (compiler), John Thaxton

—**Sheila Rosenberg**

Least Sandpiper Larry Master

***Conservatively Speaking* Boreal Forest Receives Protection in Ontario**

In July, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty announced that the province will prohibit mining and forestry across a swath of northern boreal forest larger than the Maritime provinces. Under a framework to be developed, McGuinty said 225,000 square kilometers - roughly half of Ontario's boreal forest - will be protected and designated strictly for tourism and traditional aboriginal use. The protected land represents more than 55 million acres, or more than nine times the size of the entire Adirondack Park! The other half of the unspoiled forest will be subject to forthcoming changes to the Mining Act that will mandate early consultations and accommodation of First Nations.

Scientists around the world have been calling on Canadian governments at all levels to protect the boreal forest, which is under increasing pressure from logging, mining and oil and gas exploration.

The vast boreal region in northern Ontario represents 43 per cent of the province's land mass and includes one of the world's largest intact ecosystems.

McGuinty said it is also a "globally significant" carbon sink, absorbing 12.5 million tones of carbon dioxide emissions annually from the atmosphere.

Steve Kallick, director of the International Boreal Conservation Campaign of the Pew Environment Group, heralded the province's announcement as "one of the most significant conservation commitments on Earth."

"This sets the new standard for Canada," Kallick said. "Premier McGuinty's landmark commitment brilliantly answers the call of over 1,500 of the world's top scientists."

—**Joan Collins**



Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation/NNYAS Wild Center Intern Report

Imagine a familiar landscape alive with the sweet sights, sounds and smells of Spring. Imagine the thrill of rediscovering that landscape through the lens of a bird enthusiast. Now imagine getting paid for it. As the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation/Northern New York Audubon Society Naturalist Intern at The Wild Center, I was fortunate enough to be able to share my passion for the Adirondack Park, as well as the birds that inhabit it, with a variety of people from around the globe. I have laughed, I have cried and, more importantly, I have grown both as a birder and an educator. I can recall three experiences that demonstrate how my position as the Naturalist Intern has been at once challenging and gratifying.

Upon returning to the Adirondack Park I entered what my friends and family termed *Birding Boot Camp*. Not only was I learning better to identify birds in the field but I was also learning to obey my alarm clock. I learned more in one week than I thought possible and I thoroughly enjoyed it. Midway through the summer, a man donning both socks and sandals joined one of my on-site walks billed as, "Adirondack Birding Basics." After the walk I offered to lead the group to an enclosure we had erected to observe a Common Nighthawk nesting in our parking lot. The fellow with the footwear faux pas quipped, "Oh good, that will make this walk worth it." Apparently, the content of my walk wasn't advanced enough for this curiously clefted critic. I apologized and suggested there is much to be learned from a nesting bird. I cannot recall exactly how it came about, but he admitted he didn't know how birds, "do it." As I said, there is much to be learned from a nesting bird. Lastly, I had the great pleasure of comparing life lists with an eight year-old boy named Ryan. He was visiting the museum along with his family from Massachusetts.

His father described the science school Ryan attends, the books Ryan reads and the bird feeders Ryan monitors daily. His father encouraged him to share with me the birds they've seen recently, "like the Scarlet Tanager at the feeder." Ryan quickly corrected his father, reminding him that Scarlet Tanagers preferred insects rather than the seeds offered at their feeder. Ryan was most

excited to see the Ravens and the nesting Bluebirds at The Wild Center. I was most excited to see an entire family support a young boy's passion for birds.

Perhaps the greatest challenge I now face is how to thank the friend that got me into birding. As a result of his enthusiasm, I shared sightings with Ryan, laughed with the man in the socks and sandals and learned with the NNYAS. No matter where my path may lead I will always look up!

—Elizabeth Rogers

Rutkoswki Fund Camper Report

On the recommendation of Becky Bosley, a high school science teacher at Elizabethtown-Lewis Central School, NNYAS sent fifteen-year-old Cheyenne Suzy to the DEC's Camp Colby.

When I called Becky to see how camp went for Cheyenne, she said she hadn't heard and couldn't call to find out because the Suzy's didn't have a phone. Later that day I got a message saying that Becky had stopped by the Suzy's trailer and spoke with Cheyenne, who "loved the activities, especially the hiking." She also characterized the Camp Colby cuisine as "really great," albeit she seemed a tad lukewarm about the singing sessions, which, as she put it, "were really weird."

Becky tells me Cheyenne plans to send NNYAS a thank you note in September.

—JT



Semipalmated plover Larry Master

Editor's Note

As a small group of NNYAS members and board members stood on a tall, open, exposed steel observation platform watching birds in the rain while staccato rumbles of thunder crescendoed in volume, I began to suspect that our intrepid group of naturalists might perhaps experience a diminishment of credibility if we got electrocuted trying to identify a dark blob on a dead tree through rain-splattered binoculars and spotting scopes. A conversation-stopping roar of thunder followed ominously quickly by a widespread wash of light across the clouds inspired us to call a dark blob a dark blob and beat feet off the tower. I drove home from the Annual Outing/Meeting with the windshield wipers on high, never getting out of third gear nor passed by the pickup with one headlight that followed me for two hours.

It pleases me enormously to report the completion of the merger of HPAS and SLAA, which took as long as it did because of all the devils in all the details.

We have a rich variety of field trips scheduled for the Fall and managed to cajole Matt Young into giving a presentation about finches and crossbills, which irrupted recently owing to the bountiful cone crop in northern New York. Matt did extensive work on red crossbill vocalizations. Don't miss his program.

I included inside Elizabeth Roger's lovely description of her work this summer as the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation/NNYAS Wild Center Intern. One hears that the birders, non-birders and families she worked with had as much fun, and learned as much, as Elizabeth did. I also included Mike Peterson's report on the Crown Point Banding Association's work this summer, which segues into Mike's descriptions of cormorant control in an Important Bird Area and Bird Conservation Area.

Think of this newsletter's *Poetry Corner* as an election year meditation on leadership.

For the first newsletter with a color edition for donor-level supporters of NNYAS I chose to feature the work of Larry Master, our Vice President as well, as I suspect I needn't point out, an almost embarrassingly gifted photographer and naturalist. See more at: www.masterimages.org.

—John Thaxton