

# 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.

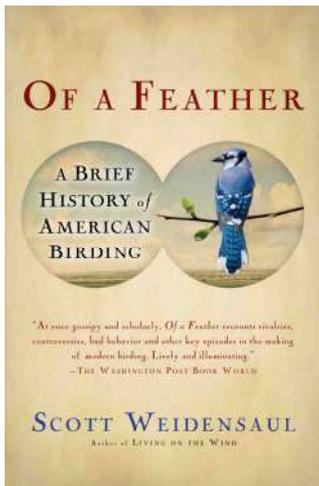
Volume 39 Number 2

June-August 2011



## Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Annual Lecture Saturday, June 4th, 7:00 p.m. Scott Weidensaul *Of a Feather: A (Brief) History of American Birding*

From the moment Europeans arrived in North America, they were awestruck by a continent awash with birds - great flocks of wild pigeons, woodlands alive with brilliantly colored songbirds. Join naturalist and author Scott Weidensaul as he traces the unpredictable history of bird study in America, from frontier ornithologists (one of whom barely escaped pursuing Apaches with a precious hawk egg hidden in his mouth) to society matrons who organized the first effective conservation movement; from luminaries like Alexander Wilson (a convicted blackmailer) and Audubon (an accomplished liar) to modern geniuses like Roger Tory Peterson.



Based on his book *Of a Feather*, this whirlwind history shows how ornithology and birding grew from eccentric hobbies into something so completely mainstream they're now (almost) cool.

Scott Weidensaul is the author of more than two dozen books on natural history, including the Pulitzer Prize finalist *Living on the Wind*, about bird migration, and *Return to Wild America: A Yearlong Search for the Continent's Natural Soul*. His newest book is *The First Frontier: The Forgotten History of Struggle, Savagery and Endurance in Early America*, to be published in February. Weidensaul writes for such publications as *Audubon*, *Nature Conservancy and National Wildlife*; he lives in the mountains of eastern Pennsylvania, where he studies the migration of hawks, owls and hummingbirds.



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 A chapter of National Audubon Society  
 serving the Adirondack, Champlain  
 and St. Lawrence regions of northern  
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 Franklin, Hamilton and St. Lawrence  
 counties.

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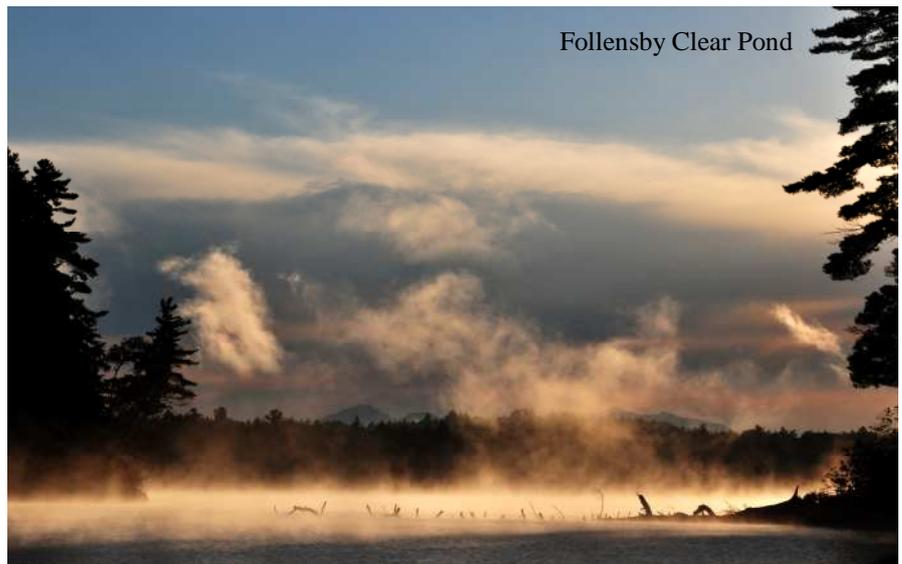
**Annual Outing/Meeting**  
**July 23rd 9:00 am**  
**Massena, New York**

Spend a day with NNYA friends and their families in the Thousand Island region of New York. We will meet at 9:00 am at the Wilson Hill Boat Launch just off of Route 131 in Massena, New York. Depending on the weather and people's inclinations we will either do some birding along the causeway, continue on to the Wilson Hill Wildlife Management Area, or head up to Robert Moses State Park (RMSP). All three options will provide some great birding opportunities and will involve a bit of walking on flat, even surfaces. We will bird until about noon and then head over to the pavillion at RMSP where we can enjoy our lunch, rain or shine, and hold a brief meeting that will include a synopsis of our accomplishments over the year and pull the winning raffle ticket for the Elk Lake Lodge stay.

**To bring:** lunch, snacks, beverages, binoculars (swim suit and sunscreen optional).

**To register:** Email Charlotte Demers @ [cdemers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cdemers@frontiernet.net) or Call Charlotte Demers at (518) 582-2157

**Directions:** The Wilson Hill boat launch is located just west of Massena on the Wilson Hill Causeway just 550 feet north of its junction with Route 131. From the east (coming in on Rte 37): take a right onto Willard Road which is about 4 miles from Rte 56/37 intersection, continue down Willard Road to its intersection with Route 131, cross intersection and boat launch will be on the right. From the south (coming in on Rte 56 or 420) take a left onto Rte 37 and take a right onto Willard Road and follow directions above. From the west (coming in on Rte 37), look for Rte 131 on the left approximately 10 miles east of Waddington, next left is the Wilson Hil Causeway.



Follensby Clear Pond

**Presidents Message**

I am sad to see three great people leave the Northern New York Audubon Board of Directors and I would like to thank these three individuals for serving our chapter so well—John Brown, Joan Clark and Lee Harper. John has served for over six years on the board, as both a Director and as Treasurer. Joan Clark should be congratulated for her work for NNYA and for seeing her 7000th bird species while on a trip to Asia (a Fork-tailed Sunbird if your counting). Lee Harper was President of the St. Lawrence-Adirondack Audubon Chapter and was instrumental in the successful merger of our two chapters. Thank you John, Joan and Lee for generously giving your time, knowledge and passion to our organization.

I am excited that our annual outing will be in the Thousand Island region of New York on July 23rd. It's a great area with lots of recreational venues and some fantastic birding opportunities (cabins and campsites available).

—Charlotte Demers

**Saturday June 4th, 2011**  
**Adirondack Interpretive Center (AIC)**  
**Newcomb**

**Description:** Hike the lovely trails at the AIC. The trails lead through lakeshore, river, forest, and wetland ecosystems. We hike out to the R. W. Sage Jr. Memorial Trail. The Sage Trail is a loop trail that crosses the Rich Lake Outlet. We'll enjoy an easy walk along the shoreline of Belden Lake through a mixed wood forest that harbors a nice variety of wood warblers.

**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Meet:** At the Adirondack Interpretive Center (formerly the Newcomb VIC) main building.

**Leader:** Charlotte Demers

**Registration:** No registration required. For more information, visit the AIC website at: [www.ESF.edu/AIC](http://www.ESF.edu/AIC) or call (518) 582-2000; or contact Charlotte at [cde-mers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cde-mers@frontiernet.net) or (518) 582-2157

**Saturday July 2nd, 2011**  
**Adirondack Interpretive Center (AIC)**  
**Newcomb**

**Description:** The Sucker Brook Trail is a 1.0-mile trail that runs along the outlet to Rich Lake providing opportunities to glimpse mink and otter in the open water as well as heron, waterfowl and loons. The surrounding hardwood forest is a great place to spot pileated woodpeckers and wood warblers.

**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Meet:** At the Adirondack Interpretive Center (formerly the Newcomb VIC) main building.

**Leader:** Charlotte Demers

**Registration:** No registration required. For more information, visit the AIC website at: [www.ESF.edu/AIC](http://www.ESF.edu/AIC) or call (518) 582-2000; or contact Charlotte at [cde-mers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cde-mers@frontiernet.net) or (518) 582-2157

**Lake Everest Canoe/Kayak**  
**Wilmington, July 8th, 2011**

Lake Everest is the damned up part of the W. Branch of the Ausable River in Wilmington. If one puts in at the town beach and paddles upstream the water remains deep enough to paddle through some very birdy territory before becoming white water. The songs of veeries sometimes fill the air of an evening, we paddle beneath an osprey nest and usually see eastern kingbirds feeding young. The current is quite gentle, which makes for a relaxing paddle.

**Leaders:** Pat & John Thaxton

**Meet:** Lake Everest Beach (left side)

**When:** Friday, July 8, 5 p.m.

**Bring:** Canoe/Kayak and paddles, PFDs, clothing for the weather and binoculars.

**Contact:** Pat & John @576-4232 or [jpthax5317@aol.com](mailto:jpthax5317@aol.com).

**Saturday August 6th 2011**  
**Adirondack Interpretive Center (AIC)**  
**Newcomb**

**Description:** We will hike The Rich Lake Trail and Peninsula Trail which offer great views of Rich Lake and Goodnow Mountain. The trails lead through lakeshore, river, forest, and wetland ecosystems. The old-growth hemlocks along the trail provide excellent habitat for kinglets, chickadees and juncos. The trail also passes some large glacial erratics and interesting rock outcrops.

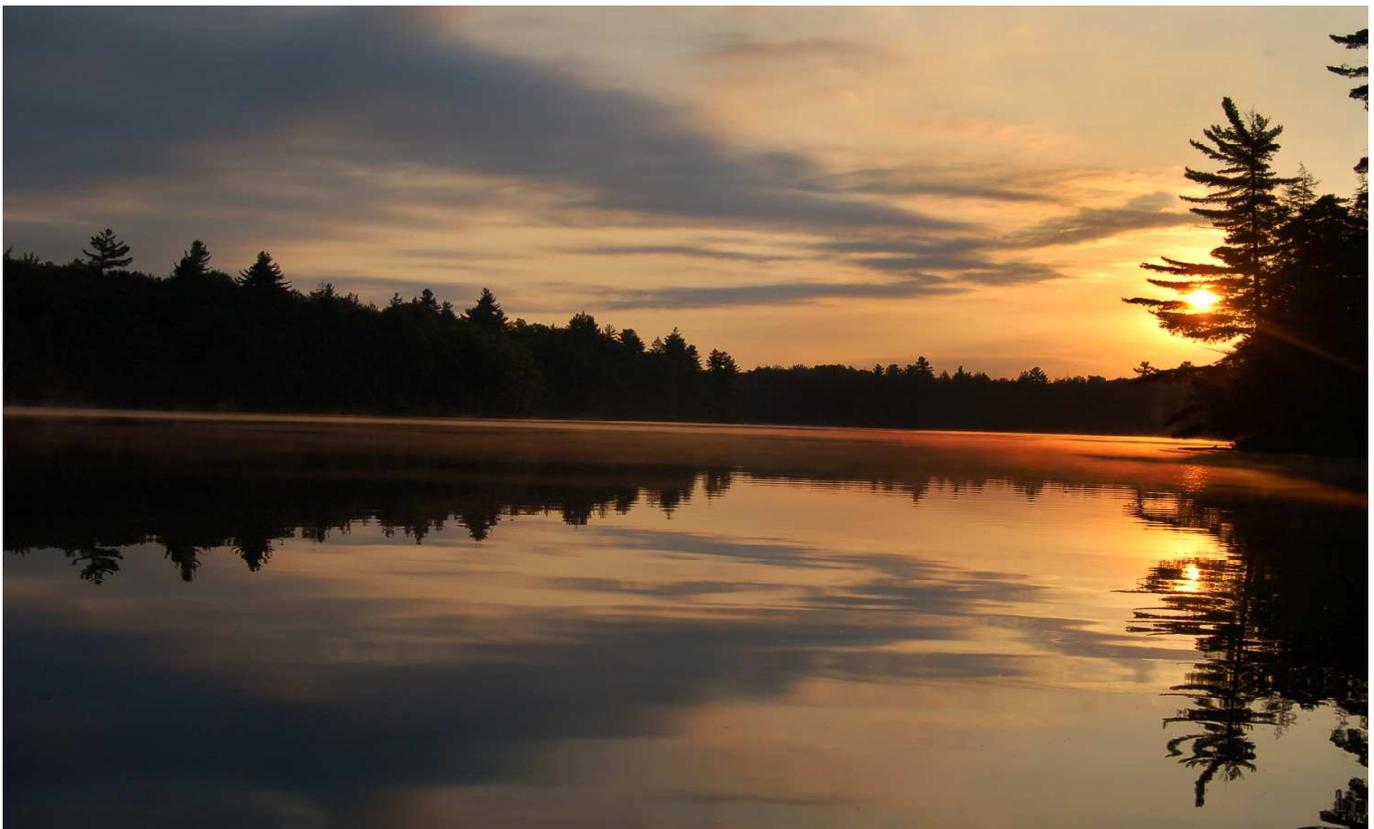
**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Meet:** At the Adirondack Interpretive Center (formerly the Newcomb VIC) main building.

**Leader:** Charlotte Demers

**Registration:** No registration required. For more information, visit the AIC website at: [www.ESF.edu/AIC](http://www.ESF.edu/AIC) or call (518) 582-2000; or contact Charlotte at [cde-mers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cde-mers@frontiernet.net) or (518) 582-2157

*Long Lake*



## 9th Annual Great Adirondack Birding Celebration Schedule

For registration information visit the Paul Smiths Visitor Interpretive Center's web site: [www.adkvic.org](http://www.adkvic.org) or call 518.327.3376 for more information.

**COST:** In order to provide better services to participants, a few changes have been made to the Great Adirondack Birding Celebration for 2011. Event Registration includes participation in all programs (with the exception of Friday's Boreal Ecology Workshop), lunch, breaks, program materials and a one-year membership in the Adirondack Park Institute, *Friends of the Interpretive Centers*.

API Member Registration - \$110

Non-API Member Registration - \$125

Saturday Only Registration - \$85

Boreal Ecology Workshop on Friday - \$75

Lunch on Saturday for non-registered guests - \$20

Saturday Night Lecture and Reception for non-registered guests - \$10

Call (518) 327-3376 for more information, or visit [www.adkvic.org](http://www.adkvic.org)

### Friday, June 3rd, 2011

9 a.m.-5 p.m. Check in/Materials—Paul Smiths VIC.

10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Boreal Ecology Workshop at Mas-sawepie Mire\*

\*(This workshop has an additional fee of \$75)

2:00 p.m. Wetland Walk @ Paul Smiths VIC

7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m. Dessert Reception @ the VIC (pre-registration)

9:00-10:00 p.m. Owl Prowl @ Paul Smiths VIC

### Saturday, June 4th, 2011

7:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Field Trips: Bloomingdale Bog, Madawaska Flow, Mid-River Farm, Spring Pond Bog, Whiteface Mountain

9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Vendors @ the VIC

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Lunch @ the VIC

3:00 p.m.-4:30 p.m. Teddy Roosevelt Birding Challenge @ the VIC

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m. The Joseph and Joan Cullman Foundation

Annual Lecture (@ the VIC)

Scott Weidensaul, Author, Naturalist and Renowned Bird Expert

8:00 p.m. Reception and Benefit Drawing @ the VIC

### SUNDAY, June 5th

7:00 a.m.-11:30 a.m. Repeat of Saturday's Field Trips



Common Mergansers

All photographs this issue by Pete DeFina



Common Loon with young

## 7th Annual Hamilton County Department of Tourism/Audubon New York Adirondack Birding Festival

Note: Registration is required for each outdoor event (registration is not required for any evening programs).

To Register, call 800.648.5239 or 518.548.3076

Monday-Friday 9:am-4:00pm

### Friday, June 10th, 2011

7:00 a.m. Walk: Ferd's Bog, Inlet (Boreal Species).

2:00 p.m. Walk: Forked Lake Road, Long Lake (3 hrs along Raquette River)

7:00 p.m. Evening Presentation: *All About Birds*, Joan Collins—Long Lake Town Hall (60-90 minutes)

### Saturday, June 11th, 2011

7:00 a.m. Walk: Perkins Clearing—Lake Pleasant (mourning warbler, olive-sided flycatcher—3 hours)

7:00 a.m. Hike: Fiddler's Pond—Piseco (3 miles, 5-6 hours)

7:00 a.m. Hike: Lows Ridge/Hitchins Pond—Long Lake (5-6 hours)

7:00 a.m. Canoe: Bog River/Hitchins Pond—Long Lake (5-6 hours)

2:00 p.m. Driving Safari: Powley Road—Piseco (3 hours)

4:00 p.m. Walk: Cedar River—Indian Lake (2-3 hours)

7:30 p.m. Evening Presentation: *The Usual Suspects: A Sampler of ADK Speciality Birds*, John Thaxton—Indian Lake Theatre (60-90 minutes)

### Sunday, June 12, 2011

7:00 a.m.) Hike: Fiddler's Pond—Piseco (5-6 hours)

7:00 a.m. Walk: Lake Durant Marsh—Blue Mountain Lake (5-6 hours)

7:00 a.m. Walk: Northville-Lake Placid Trail—Long Lake (5-6 hours)

7:00 a.m. Driving Safari: Moose River Plains IBA—Inlet (5 hours)

12:00 p.m. W.W. Durant Cruise: Tribute to Gary Lee—Raquette Lake (2 hours)

## Like to Watch Loons? Join in the Annual Loon Census on Saturday, July 16th from 8:00-9:00a.m.

Help the Wildlife Conservation Society look for loons! Join in the Loon Program's Annual Loon Census on Saturday, July 16th, 2011, from 8-9a.m. For more information or to choose a lake to conduct your observations, please email [adkloon@wcs.org](mailto:adkloon@wcs.org) or call 518-891-8872. To learn more about the Annual Loon Census, visit [www.wcsadirondacks.org](http://www.wcsadirondacks.org).

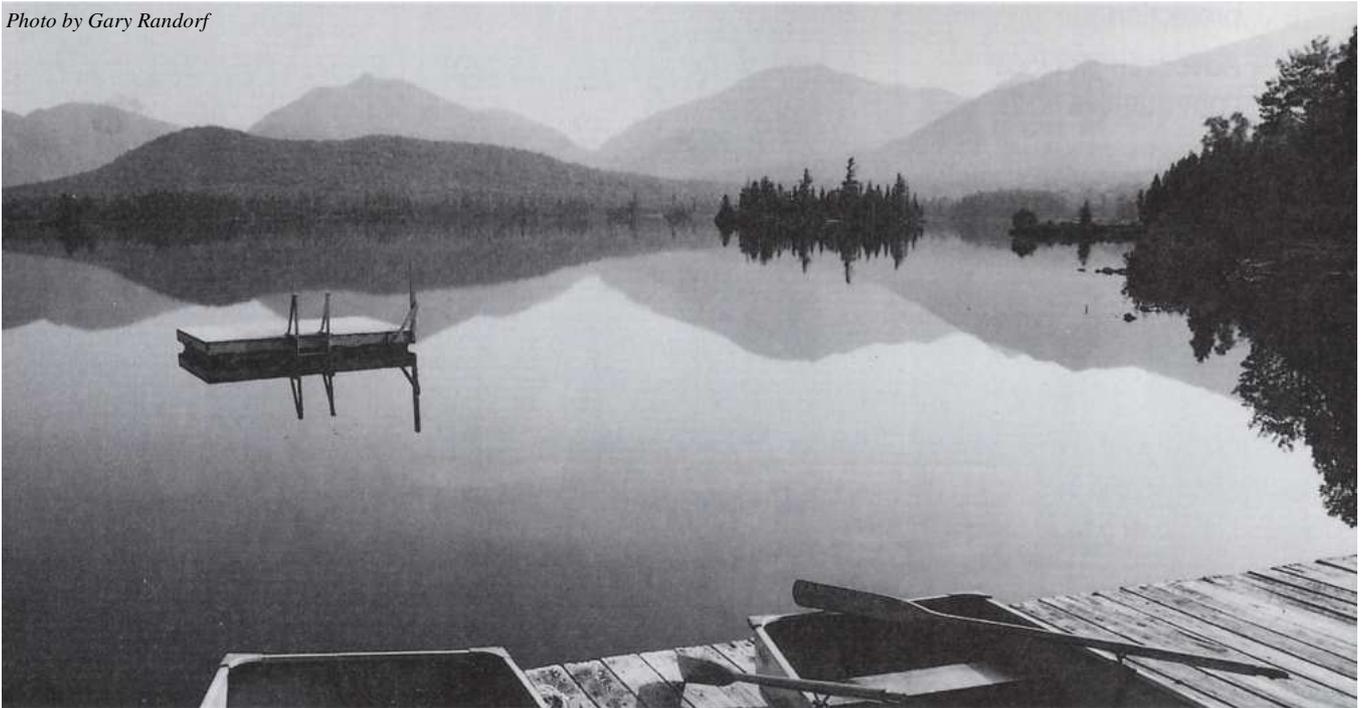
## 2011 Northern New York Audubon Raffle—Elk Lake Lodge

As a member and supporter of NNYA, you contribute to an organization dedicated to conserving and restoring wildlife and their habitats through advocacy and education. All of these programs are funded by donations from NNYA members and other generous supporters. Membership dues only covers approximately 50% of the operational costs of the organization. We need your help to continue to offer a variety of activities and take advantage of educational opportunities.

This year's raffle prize is a two-night stay at the fabulous Elk Lake Lodge, which National Geographic Magazine called the "jewel of the Adirondacks." Located in a 12,000 acre private forest, Elk Lake reflects the high peaks surrounding it—Nippletop, Blake, Colvin, Dix and McComb. Private trails lead off in all directions, guests enjoy the use of complimentary canoes and rowboats and the stay includes breakfast, a picnic selected the night before and a full dinner. Absolutely unique, Elk Lake Lodge ranks high on everybody's short list. Location, location, location...

You will be receiving in the mail a book of raffle tickets that are \$5.00 each or the book of six for \$25.00. Please help support NNYA by purchasing or selling tickets. Send your check or money order made out to "Northern New York Audubon" in the envelope provided. If you would like additional raffle tickets please contact Charlotte Demers at (518)582-2157 or [cdemers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cdemers@frontiernet.net). The drawing for this fabulous prize will be at the NNYA Annual Meeting to be held **July 23rd**. For more information on this event, visit the NNYA web site ([www.nnya.org](http://www.nnya.org)) and click on "events" (or see page 2).

*Photo by Gary Randorf*



## The First NNYA Calendar Photo Contest

Calling all photographers and anyone that knows which button to push on their tiny pocket size camera. We've decided that NNYA should produce a calendar that spotlights the photographic talents of our members as well as the beautiful avian species that inhabit our region. We thought it would be fun, and a great fund raiser, to put together a 2012 Calendar. So look through your digital collection of bird pictures and email us some of your best shots. We encourage everyone to participate, from those that speak aperture and f-stop to those of us who use the automatic setting on our camera. Send your digital photos to Charlotte at [cdemers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cdemers@frontiernet.net) by August 31st. Your Board of Directors will pick the 12 best photos for the main calendar pictures and sprinkle a few more throughout the calendar. We'll also post them on our website and Facebook page. Make sure to include your name so we can give you proper photo credit; if you remember where and when the picture was taken, include that as well. We'll have the calendar ready for the holiday season - they will make great Christmas gifts.



## Book Review:

### *The Crossley ID Guide (Eastern Birds)*

544 pages, 640+color plates, \$35.00

Richard Crossley, author of *The Crossley ID Guide*, wanted to show birds as we *really* see them in the field, which he dubbed “reality birding”! This new, revolutionary ID guide, uses over 640 lifelike scenes and 10,000 photographs (over 99% taken by the author – quite a feat). Each scene includes: a typical habitat for a species; photographs showing the bird near and far, and from different angles; and photos depicting various plumages and behaviors, including flight. The result is the first guide to portray all key identification characteristics: size, shape, behavior, probability, and color.

For example, the Ring-necked Duck scene has 31 birds shown on the page. Eighteen are on the water, with 3 close-ups of an adult male and female, plus a 1<sup>st</sup> winter male, 5 birds farther away, and 10 birds in the distance. Thirteen birds are depicted in flight over a marsh in the background of the scene. Crossley encourages the reader to



look at the close up photographs, then move your eyes to the birds farther away and focus on details that remain constant. He wants birders to not just *look* at birds, but to really *see* them.

*Typical photo montage—black scoter, p69.*

Each scene has just a few notes indicating male, female, juvenile, and when applicable, plumages in between. What you will not find is lines pointing at field marks typical of other identification guides. Crossley wants birders to work out identification on their own without being shown or told how to look at birds.

The book is organized into eight different groups of species based on habitat and physical similarities, and not necessarily in taxonomic order. The eight groups are summarized on the inside cover, followed by 16 pages showing every species in the book for size, shape, and color comparison. Page numbers are included so birders can quickly flip to the correct location in the book.

Although the author states, “I don’t like text”, there is a useful introduction, often entertaining, that explains how to use the book and “how to be a better birder”. Crossley emphasizes carrying a notebook to take field notes as the best approach to really *seeing* birds.

Common and widespread species get a full page in the new book. Scarce and more localized species get a half-

page, and rare and unlikely to be seen species receive a quarter page.

Under the scene plates on each page, there is some text: the common and scientific name for the species; 4 letter alpha code (used by banders – a key is included at the back of the book); average length of the species; the bird’s status (relative abundance); preferred habitat; behavior; and ID field marks. Range maps are also included. Crossley is developing an interactive website to include expanded captions for the plates at [www.CrossleyBirds.com](http://www.CrossleyBirds.com).

*The Crossley ID Guide* is 3.6 pounds, 544 pages, with 9.8 x 7.4 x 1.5 inch dimensions. So this is not a guide that you would carry on a backpacking trip, but rather one you would take along on a car birding trip or peruse at home. It would be particularly helpful to reference while observing waterfowl or while at a hawk watch.

A blogger recently commented that Crossley’s guide would make a wonderful electronic book – where you could zoom-in on different birds in each scene. I suspect this type of resource will be coming soon. For now, *The Crossley ID Guide* is a highly-recommended, terrific, state-of-the-art identification resource for birders!

—Joan Collins

## Poetry Corner Early Bird

Oh, if you're a bird, be an early bird  
And catch the worm for your breakfast plate.  
If you're a bird, be an early early bird-  
But if you're a worm, sleep late.

--Shel Silverstein

## Dear NNYA Members

Thank you all for responding so generously to our 2011 appeal letter. As you may know, all of the efforts by our members and directors are performed voluntarily and number thousands of hours a year. However the materials, printing and mailing of our publications as well as fees for electronic information require your kind donations.

—Pat Thaxton, Membership

## NNYA Board of Directors Meeting Saturday, July 23rd, 12:00 p.m. Massena, NY (see Ann. Mtg, p. 2)



Red-winged Blackbirds

## NNYA/Wild Center Intern Schedule

This year the NNYA/Wild Center naturalist is Christina Domser. Christina is a biology graduate of SUNY Potsdam and is currently enrolled in a Masters of Landscape Architecture Program at ESF. Christina has done monitoring work for SUNY Potsdam and TNC for Blanding's Turtle and Spruce Grouse. In addition she has also worked for the DEC as a Wildlife Technician.

Enjoy naturalist walks with Wild Center staff all summer long. Learn the basics of birding while improving your identification, ecology, and natural history skills. These programs are in partnership with Northern New York Audubon.

### **Tweets and Treats: Birding and Coffee at The Wild Center**

**Dates:** June 5, 12, 19, 26, and July 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

**Time:** 8:00 am – 10:00 am

Join a naturalist on The Wild Center trails every Sunday morning in June and July for a bird walk and coffee. Learn the basics of bird identification, stop at the bird blind, search for nests, and maybe even learn a few songs of our summer residents. Afterwards, enjoy a relaxing coffee and snack break on our patio by Greenleaf Pond. Later in the day, the bird list will be posted on The Wild Center's twit-



Great Blue Heron/Follensby Clear Pong

terfeed, "wildcenter." We'll meet outside at 8:00 am on our patio near the tent. Free.

### **Whiteface Mountain Birds and Alpine Ecology Exploration**

**Date:** June 18 and July 30

**Time:** 8:30 am – 11:30 am

The Wild Center, in partnership with [Whiteface](#), is pleased to offer naturalist walks on Whiteface Mountain. Join a Wild Center naturalist for an interpretive hike that focuses on mountain habitats and birds along Whiteface Mountain Veteran's Memorial Highway and summit. At the summit, be prepared for a short, ~¾ mile hike on rough, rocky ground. This is a great opportunity to study the alpine ecosystem, including rare alpine plants, as well as maybe see or hear the endangered Bicknell's Thrush. The group will meet in Wilmington and from there will carpool to the summit via the toll road. Please be prepared with sturdy walking shoes, binoculars/field guides, appropriate outdoor clothing (it can be cold up there!), bug spray, and water. Cost: \$6.00 per person (payable at the Tollhouse). To register go to [www.wildcenter.org/events](http://www.wildcenter.org/events) or contact Sally Gross, [sgross@wildcenter.org](mailto:sgross@wildcenter.org), 518-359-7800 x116.



### **Boreal Birds and Bogs at Bloomingdale Bog**

**Date:** July 9 and 23

**Time:** 8:00 – 10:00

Join a Wild Center naturalist and explore the unique natural history of Adirondack bogs. This large bog wetland, complete with sedge marsh and coniferous woods, provides ample opportunity to see some great boreal birds. Hikes in 2010 brought us Gray Jay, Lincoln's Sparrow, Black-backed Woodpecker, Palm and other warbler species, moose tracks, toads, and more! Learn the basics of birding while increasing your identification, ecology, and natural history skills. Easy walking along an old rail-road bed. Please be prepared with sturdy walking shoes, binoculars/field guides, appropriate outdoor clothing, bug spray, and water. To register go to [www.wildcenter.org/events](http://www.wildcenter.org/events) or contact Sally Gross, [sgross@wildcenter.org](mailto:sgross@wildcenter.org), 518-359-7800 x116. Space is limited to 12 participants. Free.



## Editor's Note

When we drove up to check out Ausable Marsh in preparation for a field trip there three days later we encountered a police barricade indicating a closed road, so we left our unauthorized vehicle on the legal side of the barricade and walked along the road, which, after about a hundred yards, descended below the surface of Lake Champlain, which had completely inundated the marsh. Oh well.

Meanwhile we heard birds singing all around us and in no time picked up a warbling vireo flitting among the tree-tops, with the result that we decided to go ahead with the trip, the eighty percent chance of rain notwithstanding, and by the time we left home Saturday morning we had had calls from ten people wanting to join us, hang the weather. I hypothesized that the prodigious amount of rain we had this spring had sufficiently exasperated everyone that they preferred getting caught in a downpour to staying home and monitoring how far above flood stage Lake Champlain and a passel of North Country rivers had risen.

The Ausable River had risen so high the week before that my primary care physician's office called to cancel my appointment, as though I would have thought twice about abandoning my car on the side of the road and wading a mile up route 73 in order not to miss my annual physical exam. One of my houseguests this weekend had never seen the Adirondacks, and after two and a half days here still hadn't, but she wondered at how many birders showed up at our field trip and how the rain had held off until we started to drive home. We saw a scarlet tanager, wood ducks, a bald eagle, a northern harrier, swamp sparrows, a great-crested flycatcher, a northern oriole, an American redstart—so many birds that one birder on the trip doubled his life list. Sometimes you get lucky.

Fortunately, it never rains during the Great Adirondack Birding Celebration at Paul Smiths or the Hamilton County/New York Audubon Birding Festival, and I've included the complete schedule of trips and activities for both events, which will be closed this year to black flies.

This year's annual raffle features a 2-night stay, with all meals, at Elk Lake Lodge, and for the first time NNYA will sponsor a Calendar Photo Contest, the winners of which will appear in a calendar of members' bird photographs. I've also included field trips at venues as diverse as Adirondack Interpretive Center, Lake Everest, Whiteface Mountain, Bloomingdale bog and The Wild Center.

NNYA will hold its annual outing/meeting at Robert Moses State Park in Massena, New York and we welcome all members to pack a lunch and join us for some birding, hiking and/or paddling. We'll hold a brief board meeting and pick the winner of this year's raffle.

For the second time this year I found myself reaching out to Pete DeFina for some stunning Adirondack photographs, and for the second time he delivered, on a moment's notice, some absolutely beautiful work. Thanks, Pete.

—**John Thaxton**

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