



# Northern New York Audubon

September - November 2023 Newsletter

Volume 51, Issue 3

## 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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How many hot dogs does it take to feed a stadium full of sports spectators? I have no clue. But I do know thanks to research conducted by Doug Tallamy, his students and others, that it takes roughly 10,000 caterpillars to feed a clutch of chickadees! My NNYA co-president, Janet Mihuc, informs us that caterpillars are eating machines, storing proteins and fat they need for the massive reorganization of their bodies that occurs during their pupa stage. They are soft and easy to stuff into the mouths of hungry nestlings. The protein and fat stored in a caterpillar body provides chicks with the energy required to grow quickly. We can support healthy populations of caterpillars by planting and stewarding native plants. Native plants support native insects which in turn support healthy populations of birds.



Masterimages  
Photo Larry Master

Many of our board members contributed fantastic articles to this newsletter and, as always, Joan Collins has compiled information regarding a full fall schedule of bird walks. Read on and please join us on a bird walk this fall. Maybe we'll find some caterpillars too!

Janet Mihuc, Co-President  
Catherine Smith, Co-President

### Bigalow Road

Many of you will have heard of Bigalow Road near Vermontville and Bloomingdale in Franklin County. It has been featured in many books and articles as a place to possibly get the Boreal Trifecta - those three birds being Canada Jay, Black-backed Woodpecker and Boreal Chickadee. Unfortunately, it has also become a bit of a dumping ground. Old mattresses, a gas grill, and other large items have been littered along the road. During the recent Great Adirondack Birding Celebration, a fellow birder mentioned that the cleanup of that road would be a great project for Northern New York Audubon. I agreed!

With a little research I learned that the road is owned by the Town of Franklin but the land on either side is owned by NYS DEC. I stopped in the Raybrook office and got the name and phone number of the Forest Ranger for our area. I called Joseph Ordway to explain my tentative plan. I was hoping that NYS DEC would come and remove the large items and I would organize a cleanup of the smaller trash. He was totally in favor and very helpful. A crew from DEC came out and did a wonderful job cleaning up the road. I, and maybe others, walked along after they were there and there was very little trash left to be picked up.

Since many of us bird there, I would encourage you to bring along a bag and pick up any small trash that you can. It will help maintain what has been done. Thank you to NYS DEC and Joseph Ordway for helping out. It is much appreciated.

Betsy Miner, NNYA Vice-President



## For the Love of Loons

I am a volunteer field technician for the Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation headquartered in Saranac Lake, NY. As a Loon Monitor I visit my territories at least once each week beginning June 1st through August 15th. The objective is to track loon presence, nesting and breeding behavior. Weekly observations are submitted to the ACLC where the data are analyzed and added to a larger database.

I have loved loons for over 50 years. As a child my father would take me to St. Regis Pond to see them. Loons were suffering from the use of DDT which made their egg shells too fragile to incubate. In the 1970's "seeing a loon was like seeing a Unicorn" my nephew explained to his children. Today loons are often seen and in numbers.

First I find breeding adults and look for bands on their legs in hopes of identifying returning loons. Loons are territorial during breeding season and will return to the same area each spring. Usually this is the day after ice out. How do they know??

Pairs will establish a bond and choose a nesting site. My mission is to locate the nests. It is amazing how well a large black and white bird can hide amongst greenery on the shoreline. This season I found 4 nests. I watch for behavior that allows me to see how many eggs have been laid, sitting for hours waiting for the adult to stand and turn the eggs, or perhaps witness the adults trade incubation duties. This season 3 pairs had 2 eggs. The last pair over-incubated and I never saw evidence of any eggs. 6 chicks hatched. 2 chicks survived.

Loon reproduction is a risky balance between natural disturbances such as heavy rain, rising water and predation. High water floods nests. The loons have benefited from the ban of DDT but also have the Bald Eagles. We now record all eagle sightings as well as loon behavior. Often I hear the alarm wail of the loon before I see the eagle overhead.

Human disturbance is on the rise as well. Faster boats and more of them are a big threat. Unaware boaters are not giving the loons enough room to dive to safety. Chicks cannot dive well and are virtually invisible on the water in their immature plumage. Canoes, kayaks and paddleboards can get too close to the birds and disturb their feeding. A loon's behavior tells all. The Hangover from the nest means you are too close. The Penguin Dance on the water means you are way too close. The Wing-row towards you means get away...now!

As fall begins the surviving young take part in flight lessons with their parents. Immature loons will be able to migrate at the appropriate time, but the adults leave earlier. The young are able to feed themselves but don't stop begging. Perhaps the adults have had enough and take off to escape parental duties!

Ice forms later in the year than in the past. Some loons wait too long to migrate. If they have molted and are rendered flightless there is a chance they will become iced in when the cold snap comes. The ACLC performs rescues to free these loons by capture and release. Returning banded birds reflect their survival.

What better way to spend the summer than on the water watching life unfold. But Nature can be cruel. I am saddened when "my" chicks disappear or eggs are left unattended. I continue to check my loons as migration approaches and am joyous to see that the young have departed before winter. Next spring will be full of new observations!

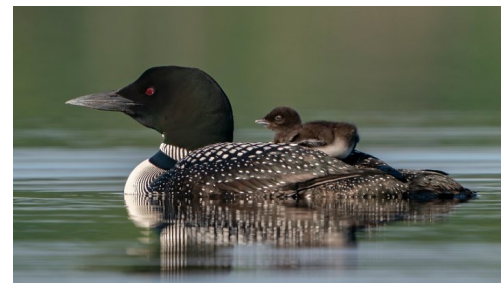


Photo by Larry Master

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Northern New York Audubon  
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Marian Bodine, NNYA Treasurer

# Green Big Year

I looked out at the backyard feeders at first light: a black-capped chickadee, followed by white-breasted nuthatch pair, a flock of dark-eyed juncos, a downy woodpecker, and some American goldfinches. After coffee and pancakes, I walked down the street to the local golf course, strapped on my skis, and glided three miles through the deep snow of the fairways, stopping to glass any birds in the bordering pines. I was excited to see pileated and hairy woodpeckers, and a golden crowned kinglet. Overall, I spotted 14 species on New Year's Day 2018, and was off to a great beginning of my green big year.



Photo by Mar Bodine

Many birders tally how many species they see over a year's time, and some try to do a 'big year' – a year in which they attempt to encounter as many species as they can in one year within some geographic area. Some birders drive and fly thousands of miles in the quest of a long bird species list. The book and movie *The Big Year* features the story of three men who competed to beat the all-time US total for a year.



Photo by Tom Langen

Recovering from a heart attack, I had been regularly walking and biking but I needed something to motivate me. I decided to do a big year, but with a twist: it would be a 'green big year'. Centered on my home in Canton, New York, I could only tally species encountered by traveling from my home under my own power: walking, skiing, biking, and canoeing. No driving whatsoever. How many species could I see in this way? I had no idea, and poking around I did not find any reports of people doing something like this. Looking over the list of birds regularly seen in my area, I set an aspirational goal of 150 species.



Photo by Tom Langen

January was cold and snowy, as it usually is in the St. Lawrence Valley. On some days the conditions were very poor, and the landscape looked bleak and birdless; on one miserable walk, I saw only a single cardinal. Nevertheless, 5 miles skiing, 12 miles biking, and 37 miles walking Canton village streets and nearby country roads resulted in 29 species. High points included seeing my first of the year (FOY) bald eagle swoop at the FOY Canada Geese, and a huge flock of snow buntings in a farmhouse yard.

February conditions were a little better, and I dared bike 47 miles on icy roads, encountering rough-legged hawk, peregrine falcon, merlin, and northern shrike. Overall, I added 15 additional species, for 44 species in the first two months. The snow melt and ice thaw of March and April brought the first waves of migrant birds. On weekends, I took long bike rides out to Upper and Lower Lakes State Wildlife Management Area, or else out quiet country roads. I associate those months with the sounds of American bittern, sandhill crane, trumpeter swan, common loon, marsh wren, and swamp sparrow, and with the long, ragged lines of snow geese moving down the valley. I added 47 new species, for 92 species in the first three months of the year.

May, with its waves of songbird migrants passing through or settling to breed, added the most species to my tally: 52 additional for a total of 144 species. Warblers, vireos, sandpipers, finches – it was incredible the diversity of birds near my home, when I really bothered to go out and look. In five months, I had nearly reached my goal.

The summer months of June to August were slower. I biked long miles along beautiful hayfields and through thick forests and saw many birds, but only ten species were new to the year. Each, though, was special, including sedge wren, cliff swallow, least bittern, and a life-list red-necked grebe. While we sheltered in a barn during a downpour, five Amish brothers pointed out an occupied house of purple martins, yielding species number 153!

The fall months of September to November yielded boreal migrants I had missed in the spring, including Cape May, palm, bay-breasted, and northern parula warblers. I identified gray-cheeked and Swainson's thrushes from their diagnostic call notes as they flew overhead in migration on one starry September night. A northern goshawk darted in front of my bike so close I could almost have touched it. I added sixteen additional species in these three autumn months.

December, I searched for cold-weather birds I had missed the prior winter, and for my nemesis bird, the horned lark. I added common redpoll, pine grosbeak, and Bohemian waxwing. My last new species, on December 27th, was a tufted titmouse. During the waning light of the last day of the year, I searched bare and stubble fields for larks, to no avail. I went home, and drank a toast to the finish of my green big year.

In the end, I encountered 174 species. Or else 175 species, if I include a ring-necked pheasant that likely had been stocked the prior hunting season. The farthest I journeyed from home was about 10 miles as a crow flies or 31 miles roundtrip as the bike travels. I birded on 107 days, and while birding I biked 941 miles, walked 99 miles, skied 16 miles and canoed 1 mile. I saw most of the species that are regularly encountered in my locality, but could have bettered my tally by making a few longer forays.

## Green Big Year, cont.

By doing a green big year, I came to know my village and its surrounding countryside much better, noticing things about the birds and other animals, plants, and people of my community that I had long overlooked. I experienced the changing of the seasons in a personal, meaningful way. I developed a deeper feel for the landscape in which I live. I am planning another green big year – I think I can encounter more than 175 species if I really try! If you want to be physically active and know your local birds and landscape better, I encourage you to commit to your own green big year, too.

Tom Langen, NNYA Board Member



Photo by Tom Langen

## A Book from the Archives

Allan and Helen Cruickshank, **1001 Questions Answered About Birds**. 1976 republication of the 1958 first edition.

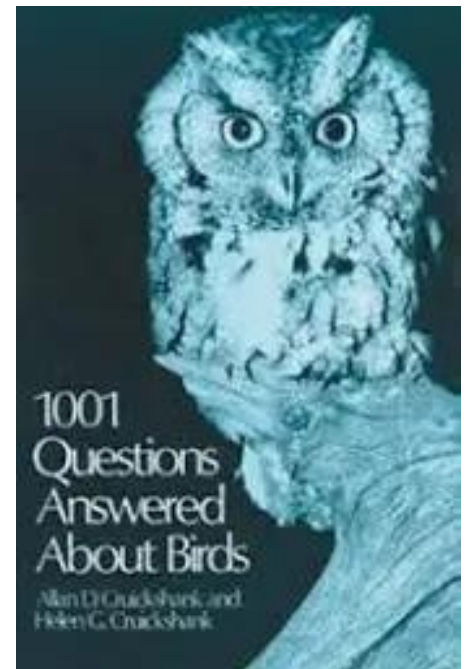
### About the Authors

Allan D. Cruickshank (1907-1974) was a well-known ornithologist and author during the 20th century. He was a prolific writer and educator, and the official photographer for the National Audubon Society. Helen G. Cruickshank (1902-1994) was a talented nature writer and photographer. Together, they made an extraordinary team for the advancement of ornithology!

### About the Book

All birders, beginners and experienced alike, are curious about some aspect of the lives of birds. Although this book was written 65 years ago, today's birders have many of the same questions. The answers provided in the book remain accurate, although modern research provides much more comprehensive explanations to questions about topics such as bird migration. The book's general categories for questions and answers include bird anatomy and physiology, mating systems and reproduction, bird migration, and conservation of birds. This book by Allan and Helen Cruickshank is both entertaining and educational. Fortunately, copies are still available in public libraries and from on-line book sellers.

Ken Adams, NNYA Board Member



## NNYA Tabling at Adirondack Harvest Festival!

We are thrilled to be a sponsor of this year's Adirondack Harvest Festival, which will be held at the Essex County Fairgrounds in Westport on September 23. This year's festival, with a focus on Fiber Production, will highlight the farms that are producing local fibers and the artists and makers that use them. After developing our Farm Grant program in 2022, we are excited for this opportunity to meet with local food and fiber producers to talk about the benefits of improving bird habitat on their farms. We also hope to inspire you, our members, to attend the festival and connect with our local farmers.

We were fortunate to award grants to two sheep farms in our last grant cycle to implement native hedgerows and fence off a wildlife corridor that will support birds and other wildlife. Small-scale livestock operations like these can improve habitat for critically declining grassland and shrubland species by implementing silvopasture, altering haying schedules, and using rotational grazing to maintain hayfields and areas of shrubland.

Please join us before the Festival for a walk at DaCy Meadow Farm at 8 am. We will be walking the grounds of DaCy Meadow Farm to spot fall migrants and year-round residents, and discuss bird-friendly habitat management. To register for the walk or to sign up as a volunteer at our table, please email [farmgrant@nnya.org](mailto:farmgrant@nnya.org). We hope to see you there!

Hyla Howe, NNYA Board Member

# Forest Feathers

More than 200 species of birds can be found in the Adirondacks and about half of these are migratory songbirds. Most of the migratory songbirds in the northern New York region utilize forests for feeding and nesting. But all forests are not the same; there is no all-purpose forest type that meets the needs of all bird species.

There are over 50 forest cover types in New York. Cover types may be defined by a single tree species such as white pine, or white cedar. Forest cover types may also include several tree species. For example, northern hardwood forests have a mixture of sugar maple, American beech, yellow birch, basswood, and white ash.

Tree species composition is not the only factor birds use for habitat selection; the size (age) class distribution of trees within the forest is also important. This is called forest structure. Forests with trees about the same size (age) are called even-aged. All-aged forests have trees of all sizes (ages), including seedlings, saplings, mature, and old trees.

Some birds utilize young, even-aged forests with high numbers of small trees; some bird species prefer even-aged forests with mature, large trees; some birds select forests with trees of all ages and sizes.

There is no all-purpose forest habitat that will satisfy the ecological needs of all birds. To find a forest songbird of interest, it's best to know both the composition and structure of its preferred habitat. Here are a few examples of migratory songbirds and their preferred northern hardwood stand structure for feeding and nesting.

## **Young, Even-aged Northern Hardwood (Seedlings and Saplings)**

Common Yellowthroat (especially near wet areas)  
Chestnut-sided Warbler  
Eastern Bluebird  
Veery  
American Redstart  
Mourning Warbler

## **Mature, Even-aged Northern Hardwood or All-aged Northern Hardwood**

Wood Thrush  
Northern Parula (especially with presence of bearded lichen)  
Black-throated Blue Warbler  
Black-throated Green Warbler (especially with pines or hemlocks included)  
Black-and-white Warbler  
Scarlet Tanager

Songbirds such as Ovenbird, Red-eyed Vireo, and Least Flycatcher are commonly found in all northern hardwood structures, except the seedling stage.

To be clear, the birds listed above can be found in other forest cover types. I used the Northern Hardwood cover type as one example. The forest structure preferences of these songbirds are intended as a “central tendency,” not a strict requirement. Habitat selection by birds can be influenced by many variables in the landscape.

For comprehensive information on habitat selection by birds:

DeGraaf, R.M., et al. 1992. New England Wildlife: Management of Forested Habitats. USDA Northeastern For. Exp. Stn. Gen. Tech. Rep. NE-144.

[New England wildlife: management forested habitats | US Forest Service Research and Development \(usda.gov\)](https://www.usda.gov/forestland/land-use-management/forest-management/new-england-wildlife-management-forested-habitats)

Ken Adams, NNYA Board Member



Photos this page by Larry Master

# Field Trips September, October & November 2023

**Friday, September 15, 2023**

## **Point au Roche State Park**

**Plattsburgh, NY**

**Meeting Time:** 9:00 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, insect repellent

**To Register:** Call 518-562-6860 or email [erinp@townofplattsburgh.org](mailto:erinp@townofplattsburgh.org)

**Brief Description:** This 850-acre "Wildlife Park" features many habitats including rocky peninsula shoreline and sand beach on Lake Champlain; forests; shrubland and old fields; picnic area and ballfield; swamp; emergent marsh and pond. 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, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. This field trip is co-sponsored with the Town of Plattsburgh. Field trip leaders are Betsy Miner, Mar Bodine, Ken Adams and Erin Pangborn. The planned route is the level terrain on Long Point peninsula (about 2 miles round trip). Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Group size limited to 20 (we may divide into smaller groups). Priority is given to Town of Plattsburgh residents and NNYA members.

**Saturday, September 16, 2023 and Wednesday, October 18, 2023**

## **Lake Alice Wildlife Management Area**

**West Chazy, NY**

**Meeting Time:** 9:00 a.m.

**Location:** Main parking area on Ridge Road

Take Northway (I-87) Exit 41. Turn left (west) on Miner Farm Road (Route 191) for 0.5 miles. Turn left (south) on Ridge Road 1.3 miles.

**Bring:** Snacks, water, insect repellent, sunscreen

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

**Brief Description:** William H. Miner returned to Chazy in 1903 to establish Heart's Delight Farm. He had a dam constructed on Tracy Brook to supply water and hydropower for the expanding farm. He named the newly-constructed lake "Lake Alice" after his wife. The hydropower infrastructure started generating electricity for the Farm during 1907-08. The W.H. Miner Foundation sold the Lake Alice property to New York State. The 1,450+ acre Lake Alice Wildlife Management Area (LAWMA) is comprised of a wide variety of habitats including open water, marsh, field, shrub-meadow, and mixed forest. Lake Alice WMA is one of Clinton County's birding hotspots; nearly 150 bird species have been recorded on the eBird list for Lake Alice WMA. Bird species commonly seen at Lake Alice in September include Canada Goose, Wood Duck, Pied-billed Grebe, Ring-necked Duck, Osprey, Belted Kingfisher, Gray Catbird, Cedar Waxwing, Common Yellowthroat, and several species of woodpeckers. Birders of all experience levels are welcome. Group size limited to 12.

**Saturday, September 23, 2023**

## **Bird Walk at DaCy Meadow Farm**

**Westport, NY**

**Meeting Time:** 8:00 a.m.

**Location:** DaCy Meadow Farm, 7103 NY 9N, Westport, NY. Phone 518-962-8339

**Bring:** Sturdy shoes and wear long pants, as ticks have been spotted in this area

**Brief Description:** Join us for a bird walk at DaCy Meadow Farm (8 a.m. to 10 a.m.) as we discuss habitat management for wildlife with the owners, David and Cynthia. DaCy Meadow Farms is home to several CATS trails that cross through meadow, wetland, river, and forest habitats. Participants are encouraged to attend the Adirondack Harvest Festival in the afternoon to learn more about local food and fiber producers in the North Country.

**To Register:** email [farmgrant@nnya.org](mailto:farmgrant@nnya.org)

## Field Trips September, October & November 2023, cont.

**Tuesday, September 26, 2023**

### **Roosevelt Truck Trail**

**Minerva, NY**

**Meeting Time:** 7 a.m.

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

**Bring:** Food, water, jacket, hiking shoes, binoculars, hat, sunscreen, and insect spray

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

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

**Saturday, September 30, 2023**

### **Low's Ridge – Upper Dam Trail for Leaf Peeping and Birding!**

**Piercefield/Colton, NY**

**Meeting Time:** 7 a.m.

**Location:** Meet at the Geiger Arena parking area in Long Lake for transportation to the trailhead on Long Lake's "Little Bus". (If you are traveling from the north, the bus can meet you at a more convenient location.) There is a restroom at the Geiger Arena, and there is an outhouse at Hitchins Pond (& a picnic table).

**Bring:** Food (lunch can be ordered for delivery at Hitchins Pond!), water, a jacket, appropriate attire/hiking shoes, binoculars, hat, sunscreen, and insect spray

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

**Brief Description:** Join Joan Collins for a walk into beautiful Hitchins Pond and the Upper Dam on the Bog River. Common Loons nest on Hitchins Pond each year. Bald Eagles and Great Blue Herons are also a common sight. The route is an old dirt road that passes through many lovely and varied habitat areas including a boreal bog, marsh, mixed forest, and ponds/lakes. After the 2.5 mile walk on level terrain to Hitchins Pond, there will be a food break at a scenic picnic area. Participants may order lunch from the Adirondack Trading Post. Lunch menus will be provided before departure. Order and enjoy a warm Panini delivered picnic side via bicycle (the canoe route is closed this year)! There will be an optional 2-mile round trip hike up Low's Ridge featuring spectacular views of the Bog River Valley and High Peaks. The round-trip distance is 5 miles, or 7 miles if the hike up Low's Ridge is added. This field trip is jointly sponsored by Northern New York Audubon and the Long Lake Parks and Recreation Department. There is a maximum of 15 participants.

**Saturday, October 14, 2023**

### **Indian Creek Nature Center**

**Canton, NY**

**Meeting Time:** 8 a.m.

**Meeting Location:** Main entrance is located on County Route 14, Rensselaer Falls, approximately 3.5 miles from State Route 69.

**Bring:** Snacks, water, binoculars and appropriate footwear, the trails can be wet

**To Register:** Please call or email Mary Beth Warburton to register 315-268-0150 or [msmarybeth.warburton@gmail.com](mailto:msmarybeth.warburton@gmail.com)

**Brief Description:** Indian Creek Nature Center (ICNC), located in the St. Lawrence Valley, is a perfect place to spend a day searching for Fall migrants. ICNC offers varied habitats which provide plenty of food for birds as they travel to their winter destinations. There are 7.9 miles of trails that include an observation tower, a boardwalk and a lean-to that overlooks a wetland. As many as 60 species of birds have been seen and or heard at ICNC on a good day. It is worth the trip to visit this unique spot located in the middle of a Wildlife Management Area. This walk is open to all levels of birding. ICNC can be found on Facebook and they have a nice website: [www.indiancreeknaturecenterny.org](http://www.indiancreeknaturecenterny.org).

**Wednesday, October 18, 2023**

### **Lake Alice Wildlife Management Area**

**West Chazy, NY**

**See September 16 Information**

# Northern New York Audubon Newsletter

## Welcome new members!

Melinda & Peter Beuf  
Patricia Chartier  
Cheryl Dybas  
Jessica Fleming  
Chris Franks  
Rebecca Kelly  
Martha Kollinger  
Michael Maxfield  
James Pugsley  
Mary Richer  
Mary Sweeney  
Allison Tatro  
Julia Valentine

To renew or to become  
a member, please visit  
[https://www.NNYA.org/  
support-NNYA/](https://www.NNYA.org/support-NNYA/)



Photo by Trish Chartier

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