

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.

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Audubon's 112th Christmas Bird Count

At a cocktail party the other evening a casual acquaintance asked me if by any chance I happened to participate in a Christmas Bird Count, and then did an almost violent double take when I matter-of-factly noted that I participate in three. She looked at me as though I had just changed from a moderately friendly guy at a casual cocktail party to a suicide bomber about to detonate an explosive vest.

"Are they social things?" she asked, raising her eyebrows with astonished disdain.

I explained that, yes, Christmas Bird Counts are extremely social things that oftentimes culminate in a festive Count Dinner, with plenty of food and drink and a very healthy dose of camaraderie, to say nothing of the extremely satisfying feeling of having contributed to an enormously important scientific data base.

"Scientific?" she said, clearly taken aback, as though participating in a Christmas Bird Count couldn't possibly produce any relevant information and represented, obviously, a ghastly attempt by a bunch of silly bird watchers to attend a normal holiday dinner party.

Shifting my position slightly to block her as she tried to walk away, I rehearsed a few facts about Christmas Bird Counts, such as last year's 2,108 North American counts documenting 57,542,123 birds in the United States and 3,355,759 in Canada. I noted that the Christmas Bird Count data base with its 111 years of records represents the most important resource in ornithology and an invaluable scientific tool, instancing, as an example, the obvious northward migration of several species of birds that clearly demonstrates a warming trend.

I told her that on last year's Ferrisburgh, Vermont CBC the New York slice of territory had its second ever yellow-bellied sapsucker, a bird usually long gone from the Adirondacks by December. I also pointed out the red-bellied woodpecker, unheard of twenty years ago in the Adirondacks and a rare sighting a decade ago, seemed obviously now breeding here as we found three different individuals.

"Where can I access the data?" she asked, causing me to do a violent double take.

—JT

"Out of Africa, Into the Adirondacks: A Conservation Journey"

A Public Talk by

Bill Weber and Amy Vedder

Tuesday, November 29th, 2011, 7 p.m.

Eben Holden Conference Center

St. Lawrence University, Canton, NY



Bill Weber and Amy Vedder lived in Rwanda for nine years, studying mountain gorillas and working with local people to conserve the species. They have both served as director of the Wildlife Conservation Society's Africa Program, where they helped create conservation programs in the Congo Basin and elsewhere in Sub-Saharan Africa. Bill and Amy live in the Adirondacks, where Bill serves as acting director of Two Countries, One Forest, an organization bringing Canadians and Americans together to conserve the northern forests. Amy is currently Vice-President of the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Sponsored by African Studies, Conservation Biology, the Mellon Environment Initiative and NNYA

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NNYA

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**Audubon's 112th Annual Christmas Bird Count
Ferrisburgh (VT/NY) CBC****Saturday, December 17th.** The Ferrisburgh count circle includes a swath of Lake Champlain shoreline as far west as Route 22. For information contact John & Pat Thaxton: JPThax5317@gmail.com or 518.576.4232.**Plattsburgh (NY) CBC****Sunday, December 18th.** The count circle is centered on Route 9 just south of the entrance to the former Plattsburgh Air Base. As the participants in this count do not meet before dispersing to their territories, contact Judy Heintz at (518) 563-5273 or heintzjf@verizon.net to arrange for a territory.**Elizabethtown (NY) CBC****Sunday, December 18th.** If you are interested in participating in this year's count, please contact Charlotte Demers at: cdemers@frontiernet.net or (518) 582-2157. The count dinner will be held at the lovingly refurbished Deer's Head Inn at 5:00 p.m. (bar opens at 4:00).**Saranac Lake (NY) CBC****Sunday, January 1st,** 56th year of this count! Meet in the parking lot at Howard Johnson's on Route 86 in Lake Placid at 7:00 a.m. sharp, or (preferably) contact the compiler, Larry Master (617) 285-9086; lawrencemaster@gmail.com. ahead of time if you plan to participate. A festive count dinner will be held at a location TBD on Sunday evening,**President's Message**

In October, Mary Beth Warburton, Pat and John Thaxton and I were pleased to represent Northern New York Audubon at the Audubon Council of New York State's fall meeting held in Alexandria Bay. As one of 27 local chapters in New York, NNYA is part of this association that promotes educational programs, develops state-wide conservation priorities and provides a framework for sharing successes, ideas and information with other chapters.

One of the agenda items at every meeting (the Council meets twice a year) is the Chapter Round-Table, where each chapter has an opportunity to highlight its recent accomplishments. Thanks to the generosity of the Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation, the bequest of Nancy Smith Collins and your generous contributions to this organization, our recent highlights were a pleasure to relay to the Council. In addition to the bird walks and programs that we offered, I was very proud to stand up and report on the education and research programs that NNYA has supported. You will read about these great projects in the Cullman Summary in this newsletter.

I hope you are as pleased to read about them as I was to report on them.

And don't you know my favorite time of year approaches...Christmas Bird Counts! Its a great way to contribute to science and conservation while at the same time meeting some wonderful like-minded future friends. If you can't get out and about to count the birds for a CBC, count the birds at your feeder during the Great Backyard Bird Count in February 17-20th. There are lots of ways to participate in these Citizen Science Programs and it all helps us understand more about birds, their habitats, life history and conservation needs.

Happy Counting!

—Charlotte Demers

Northern New York Audubon Has A Facebook Site!
"Like" us on Facebook for reminders about upcoming NNYA and other related events as well as regional conservation information and updates.Find us on
Facebook

Saturday December 3, 2011

Newcomb

A gentle hike on private land on the east end of Newcomb will hopefully result in some Boreal Chickadees and Gray Jays. The Jays have been seen by the landowners on a number of occasions. There is a small field ringed by spruces and firs to scope out followed by a short loop through the softwood forest that we will snowshoe or hike depending on the weather. The terrain is slightly hilly with uneven surface so please wear appropriate footwear.

Time: 10:00 am

Meet: At the Adirondack Interpretive Center, 5922 State Route 28N Newcomb, NY

Leader: Charlotte Demers

Registration: Email to cdemers@frontiernet.net or call the AIC at (518) 582-2000

Saturday January 7, 2012

Adirondack Interpretive Center

Newcomb

After checking out the birds at the AIC feeder, which in recent winters included redpolls, evening grosbeaks, chickadees and nuthatches, we will head out to the Sucker Brook trail. This 1.0-mile trail runs along the outlet to Rich Lake providing opportunities to glimpse mink and otter in the open water. The surrounding hardwood forest is a great place to spot woodpeckers.

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Meet: At the Adirondack Interpretive Center, 5922 State Route 28N Newcomb, NY

Leader: Charlotte Demers

Registration: Email to cdemers@frontiernet.net or call the AIC at (518) 582-2000

Saturday, January 14, 2012

Richard Landing Dyke Trail XC Ski

Massena (St. Lawrence County)

Join Eileen Wheeler on an easy ski in Massena on the Richard Landing Dyke Trail and Robert Moses State Park trails at the former nature center. We'll ski along the river and through forest and meadow habitats. Total distance 5 miles.

Bring: Warm clothes; lunch

Registration: Contact Eileen for time and meeting place— (315) 244-9957 or eiwheeler@yahoo.com

Saturday, January 21, 2012

Bloomington Bog

Bloomington (Franklin County)

Participants will hike several miles on level terrain along the old railroad bed that runs through Bloomington Bog. Watch for boreal birds, like gray jay and black-backed woodpecker, and perhaps some irruptives, like crossbills or redpolls.

Time: 8:00 a.m.

Leader: Melanie McCormick

Location: Meet at the intersection of Oregon Plains and Bigelow Roads

Bring: Water, food, binoculars and appropriate clothing

Register: Email Melanie at: mruddyduck@aol.com

Saturday February 4, 2012

Arbutus Lake

Newcomb

Participants will snowshoe a 2 mile loop around the shore of Arbutus Lake in the Huntington Wildlife Forest. This flat trail goes through mostly softwood and mixed wood forest. There is the possibility that Red and White-winged Crossbills will be in the softwoods along the trail.

Time: 10:00 am

Meet: Meet at the Adirondack Interpretive Center, 5922 State Route 28N Newcomb, NY

Leader: Charlotte Demers

Registration: Email to cdemers@frontiernet.net or call the AIC at (518) 582-2000

Sunday, February 5, 2012

Leonard Pond Trail X-Country Ski

Colton (St. Lawrence County)

Participants will cross country ski 5 miles round trip on a wide, level trail in mixed forest and boreal habitat. We will end the trip at the famous "Backwoods Inn" for lunch.

Time: 9 a.m.

Bring: Lunch, water, warm clothes

Leader: Mary Beth Warburton

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

Register: by calling Mary Beth at: (315) 268-0150 or by email: mbwarburton@verizon.net

Saturday, February 25, 2012

Ski Trip to Santanoni Great Camp

Newcomb (Essex County)

A lovely, moderate-level ski to a storied destination, this ten-mile round-trip is a classic Adirondack winter journey to an historic Great Camp. The dirt road trail is not groomed for skiing.

Time: 11 a.m.

Bring: Appropriate layers of apparel for the weather and temperature, skis, water, lunch or snacks.

Meet: At the parking lot for the Santanoni Great Camp off Route 28N in Newcomb.

Leaders: NNYAS members Pat & John Thaxton

Registration: Contact Pat & John Thaxton: 518.576.4232; email: jpthax5317@gmail.com

NNYA Board of Directors Meeting

Saturday, January 29th, 10:00 a.m.

Huntington Lodge

Newcomb

NNYAS board of directors meetings are open to the entire membership; they are an excellent forum for exchanging ideas about our increasingly dynamic Audubon chapter. Contact President Charlotte Demers (cdemers@esf.edu) for more information.

The Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation 2011 Grant

The Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation/Northern New York Audubon Avian Research Award (\$3,769) underwrote the bulk of the expenses needed to undertake an extensive study of acidic deposition on songbird populations in the Adirondacks. The work involved doing point count surveys at twelve northern hardwood forest sites where SUNY-ESF scientists have measured soil calcium levels, vegetative communities and snail and salamander populations in order to correlate songbird populations and diversity along a calcium depletion gradient. Previous studies suggest potentially significant songbird population decreases in areas with chronically calcium-depleted soil, very possibly because of low populations of snails, which birds rely on as a critical supplementary calcium source for egg formation. With the advantage of documented levels of calcium in the soil and solid estimates of snail populations, Jennifer Yantachka, for her Master's Thesis at SUNY-ESF, performed traditional point count surveys and deployed two automated digital recording systems (ADRS), a new technology potentially more accurate than human observers for the simple virtue of continuous eavesdropping and sonogram production for nearly perfect identification of confusing species. No previous study has attempted to evaluate the use of ADRS equipment in the temperate deciduous forest of the northeastern United States, with the result that deploying the equipment will result in something of a sub-study in an of itself with potentially huge implications for songbird surveys in, for example, areas difficult to access. We look forward to reading Ms. Yantachka's Master's Thesis: *Effects of Acidic Deposition of Songbird Abundance and Diversity in the Adirondack Mountains, New York*.

The Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation/Northern New York Audubon/Great Adirondack Birding Celebration Annual Lecture (\$1500) was delivered by Scott Weidensaul, the popular and highly respected author of *Living on the Wind: Across the Hemisphere with Migratory Birds*, *Mountains of the Heart: A Natural History of the Appalachians* and *The Ghost with Trembling Wings: Science, Wishful Thinking, and the Search for Lost Species*. Mr. Weidensaul's talk chronicled the plethora of contributions women have made over the years, and continue to make even as I write, to the field of ornithology. He illustrated his lecture with a profusion of drawings, paintings, photographs, maps and other graphics and he demonstrated not only an encyclopedic knowledge of ornithological history but also an extremely sharp wit and a delightful sense of humor. The talk went over extremely well, generating at its conclusion a question-and-answer session that lasted almost as long as the lecture itself. Earlier in the evening Mr. Weidensaul had joined sixty or so *Great Adirondack Birding Celebration* attendees for dinner at the *Lake Clear Inn*, talking and answering questions throughout the course of the meal.

The Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation/Northern New York Audubon Boreal and Montane Studies Grant (\$3500) underwrote a Wildlife Conservation Society study entitled *Approaches to Better Understand Stressors to Birds in the Adirondacks*, with a particular focus on the effects of critical stressors such as climate change and residential development on bird populations in the Adirondack Park. The work included studying the differences in breeding bird community integrity in areas of exurban development and in undeveloped control areas as well as identifying the building distance effect, the area around a residence in which wildlife habitat can be considered impacted by the physical structures and associated human activity. For the first time WCS research in the Adirondacks incorporated a nest monitoring component that will enable researchers to investigate impacts of residential development on nest success in developed areas and control sites, information already used in expert testimony provided by WCS to Adirondack Park Agency board members to ensure that a large development proposed for the Adirondack Park incorporates consideration of potential effects to birds. WCS researchers hope this work will lead to the development of a model that can predict the effects of residential development on breeding bird community success.

and diversity, and feel the opportunity to collect pilot data from the Adirondacks this summer will enable them to refine their methodology and thereby increase the overall success and efficiency of their field research for the next three field seasons.

The Joseph and Joan Cullman/Northern New York Audubon Boreal Bird Studies Award (\$1,100) funded a series of bird surveys in lowland boreal habitats at Shingle Shanty Preserve and Research Station, a remote, fifteen thousand acre property (protected by a conservation easement from development and logging) with approximately eighteen hundred acres of lowland boreal habitat communities such as Black Spruce-Tamarack Bog, Dwarf Shrub Bog and Marsh Headwater Stream that the New York Natural Heritage Program ranked as “exemplary.” The principle researcher oversaw/conducted forty ten minute point counts selected with simple random sampling across the core lowland habitat at Shingle Shanty, following at each the standard protocols of recording data commonly used in the area—species, distance from observer, date, time, coarse vegetation description, etc. Shingle Shanty’s mission includes developing a deep and broad ecological understanding of their property, an excellent habitat for such relatively rare species as spruce grouse, gray jay and rusty blackbird, and although bird surveys have taken place there recently they had either focused on a particular species or last a very short time. SSPARS matched this award with logistical support, in-kind time for field assistance from the project manager and data management.

The Joseph and Joan Cullman/Northern New York Audubon Education Grant (\$161) underwrote the Northern Forest Institute for Conservation Education and Leadership Training’s purchase of bird seed for the feeding stations at Adirondack Interpretative Center, the former APA Visitor Interpretive Center at Huntington Wildlife Forest in Newcomb currently undergoing a significant reinvention. The AIC plans to begin a self-sustaining bird seed program by using these funds to purchase snacks and beverages to sell to visitors at the facility, reinvest the principal in more saleable items and use the profit to purchase bird seed for their numerous feeders. The AIC feeding station is being renovated and expanded, with improvements such as windows in a previously windowless wall opposite the feeders and a microphone/speaker system that will pump bird calls and songs from the feeders into the AIC. The popularity of feeder-watching has increased exponentially at AIC, which plans to deploy more feeders this season than ever before.

Great Gary Owl Photograph by Larry Master



Available Now! NNYA's 2012 Calendar

Order your copy of NNYA's first annual calendar. Printed on heavyweight stock, the calendar features bird photographs by NNYA members.

When we invited our members to submit photos for possible inclusion in our first calendar we figured "maybe it'll work, maybe it won't."

But it worked big time and all manner of stunning images of birds started arriving, from loons in perfect breeding plumage to irate-looking black-crowned night heron nestlings scowling at the photographer.

The calendar represents the work of fifteen different photographers who obviously love Adirondack birds and seem to carry high quality cameras wherever they go. With as many styles as photographers, the collection of photographs amounts to a delightful miscellany of diverse species in highly varied settings.

8.5" X 11", \$12.95 +\$2.55 shipping

Send your check for \$15.50 to:

**Charlotte Demers
21 Sanford Lane
Newcomb, NY 12852**

Book Signing

The Crossley ID Guide: Eastern Birds

Richard Crossley

Sunday, December 11, 2011

1:00-3:00 p.m.

Wild Birds Unlimited

3084 Route 50—Suite 1

Saratoga Springs, NY

www.wbu.com/saratogasprings

Meet Richard Crossley, ask questions about his extraordinary new field guide and listen to his cataract of stories about hitchhiking over 100,000 miles in search of birds.

The Crossley ID Guide made quite a splash in the birding world when it was published by Princeton University Press earlier this year. Birders and book reviewers wondered aloud at the sheer volume of photographs Crossley took of birds at all times of year in all variations of plumage and habitat. Crossley took more than 10,000 photographs that his right-hand man, Ciprian Patulea, photoshopped into phantasmagorically stunning montages. Buy a copy before 12/4 and enter a drawing to have lunch with Crossley before the signing.



Northern New York Audubon

2012

2012 Great Backyard Bird Count February 17-February 20

This year's Great Backyard Bird Count will take place from Friday, February 17th through Monday, February 20th.

This annual four-day event engages bird watchers of all ages and skill levels in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent. Anyone can participate, from beginning bird watchers to experts. It takes as little as fifteen minutes on one day, or you can count for as long as you like on each day of the event. It's free, fun, and easy—and it helps the birds. The website will be adding updated GBBC materials, for the next count, as they become available.

Watch the power point presentation, visit the special page for kids, print a regional tally sheet, check out the top birds reported in the last GBBC, download the GBBC poster.

Participants count birds anywhere for as little or as long as they wish during the four-day period. They tally the highest number of birds of each species seen together at any one time. To report their counts, they fill out an online checklist at the Great Backyard Bird Count website.

As the count progresses, anyone with Internet access can explore what is being reported from their own towns or anywhere in the United States and Canada. They can also see how this year's numbers compare with those from previous years. Participants may also send in photographs of the birds they see. A selection of images is posted in the online photo gallery.

Scientists and bird enthusiasts can learn a lot by knowing where the birds are. Bird populations are dynamic; they are constantly in flux. No single scientist or team of scientists could hope to document the complex distribution of so many species in such a short time.

Data from the GBBC can help answer many pressing question about birds:

How will this winter's snow and cold temperatures influence bird populations? Where are winter finches and other irruptive species that appear in large numbers during some years but not others? How will the timing of birds' migrations compare with past years? How are bird diseases, such as West Nile Virus, affecting birds in different regions?

Go to: www.birdsource.org/gbbc/

Attention 11- to 17-year-olds Spend a week at Camp Colby or Pack Forest Next Summer For Free

Each year NNYA sponsors a student to attend summer camp at one of the DEC's summer camps—Camp Colby in Saranac Lake (11-13 year olds) or Pack Forest in Warrensburg (14-17 year olds). **For more information about the contest contact:**

Eileen Wheeler at (315) 244-9957 or email at eiwheeler@yahoo.com

For more information about Camp Colby or Pack Forest, visit the DEC Youth Education Camp website: www.dec.state.ny.us/website/education/edcamps/html

Where To Find Birds

Crossbills feed atop the spruces
Lawns and lakes are good for geoses.

Peeps and Pipers on the beeches—
Rails and Limpkins feed on leeches.

Larids root in smelly dumps—
Hemlocks harbor Yellow-rumps.

Insects draw both Swift and Swallow—
Brant on high their leaders follow.

Flycatchers too like buggy places—
Dippers bathe where water races.

Hawks and Eagles soar the ridges—
Phoebe's nest beneath the bridges.

Woodpeckers favor trees all rotten—
Bob White Quail prefer high cotton.

Grebes and Coots with toes that widen—
Take to phragms to do their hide'n.

Wrens and friends nap in brushy piles—
(Careful there! Don't Wake up Stiles!)

Grouse and Turkeys gallinaceous—
Like their woods with open spaces.

Jays and Crows and Corvid choices—
Listen for their raucous voices.

Coops and Sharps with wing-tips round—
Hunt where LBJs abound.

Thermals draw the Vulture kettles—
Hummers search the flower petals.

Trunks are where Brown Creepers sup—
They start down low and spiral up.

Nuthatches take a different tack—
They scamper down to find a snack.

Waders feast in shallow water—
Fish and frogs had best stay out'r.

Warblers take some special care—
They could be most anywhere.

The cuckoo's song is sometimes terse—
Excepting when it's set to verse.

—COOx2

(Editor's Note: In the ninth couplet, "Stiles" refers to a Stiles Thomas, an octogenarian marsh warden of a local preserve in Annendale, NJ known as *The Celery Farm.*)

Editor's Note

I awoke to what sounded like a few hundred red and flying squirrels simultaneously pouncing on my roof and then running in place so rapidly they transmogrified into the steady roar of a superhighway at rush hour, and by the time I blinked myself into quasi-consciousness I heard water in every direction—crashing noisily off a plastic tarp covering a pile of wood outside the bedroom window and splashing wildly into instantaneously-formed puddles beneath two valleys of the roof. When I finally staggered over to the deck door and switched on the outside lights the cataract of water coursing off the roof valley completely obscured the view and reminded me of video clips of riot police using water canon to disperse a throng of violent demonstrators.

The violence of the rain continued all day, forcing me multiple times to put on a rain suit and shovel away pools of water that had formed in depressions scoured out below the roof valleys, and although I feared the force of the winds that would accompany the hurricane they never arrived, possibly because I live on the shoulder of Baxter Mountain, which does an excellent job of blocking winds from the north.

The following morning on the way to Elizabethtown we switched on Vermont Public Radio and, like a scene in a low budget, bad B-movie, heard the newscaster say, "Irene was as devastating as feared. New York City was largely spared, although several small upstate towns suffered catastrophic damage, such as Keene, NY." We carefully negotiated the since resurfaced driveway (don't ask) and turned left, rather than right, on 9N so we could see what happened to Keene. I couldn't believe the damage; a boulder the size of a car in the middle of someone's driveway, a staircase in the middle of someone's lawn.

The way the people of Keene pulled together to deal with the catastrophe made me wonder at the powerful sense of community in the town, and in multiple towns in the Adirondacks, like Jay and Upper Jay and Ausable Forks, places where cars and houses and roads and bridges washed away for the force of the swollen Ausable River and its swollen tributaries.

We have lots of fun things going on this season, from four Christmas Bird Counts in our area to seven field trips to everywhere from Santanoni Great Camp to Bloomingdale Bog to the Richard Landing Dyke Trail along the St. Lawrence River, and I hope more and more NNYA members get curious about The Great Backyard Bird Count and give it a try—it's an awful lot of fun and a great interactive experience that even I enjoy.

And how's about that calendar: NNYA's first one, featuring photos of birds submitted by members. I quite frankly worried about the quality of the submission, until I saw them. Bravo NNYA members.

I devoted considerable space to describing how we distributed the 2011 Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation Grant. This fall I attended the New York State Audubon Council meeting, along with Pat and Charlotte Demers and Mary Beth Warburton. As we sat in the Round Table meeting and listened to the other twenty-six chapters describe their work for the year, and then listened to Charlotte describe ours, I swelled with pride at how important a National Audubon Chapter NNYA has become, and how fortunate we are to have the continued support of the Cullman Foundation. **—John Thaxton**

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NORTHERN NEW YORK AUDUBON, INC.