

# 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 3

September-November 2011

## Saturday, September 3, 2011 Santanoni Farm Newcomb

A short walk of just over a mile will bring us to the farm complex on the Santanoni Preserve. The 12,500 acre preserve is home to the Santanoni Lodge, built from 1892-93. While we won't be hiking the 4 miles into the Lodge, there are some old buildings at the farm including a beautiful creamery and some great old fields and orchards that we can explore. After the hike, participants can visit the Gatehouse building that houses a small museum with photos and information about the history and renovation efforts at the Lodge.

**Time:** 9 a.m.

**Meet:** At Adirondack Interpretive Center, 5922 State Rt 28N Newcomb, NY

**Leader:** Charlotte Demers

**Registration:** Email to [cdemers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cdemers@frontiernet.net) or call the AIC: (518)582-2000

## Saturday, October 1, 2011 Huntington Wildlife Forest Newcomb

A beautiful 3 mile walk in the privately owned Huntington Wildlife Forest. We will be walking along a level dirt road that parallels a lovely marsh at the west end of Rich Lake. The walk continues to a small pond and includes both conifer and hardwood habitats. Plan on two hours of easy walking.

**Time:** 9 a.m.

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

**Leader:** Charlotte Demers

**Registration:** Email to [cdemers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cdemers@frontiernet.net) or call the AIC: (518) 582-2000

*American Copper Lifecycle All Paintings this issue by Nan Wilson*



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Northern New York Audubon, Inc.

A chapter of National Audubon Society  
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**Saturday, October 15, 2011**  
**Westport Boat Launch/Noblewood/Coon Mountain**  
**Westport (Essex Co.)**

The trip will begin with a visit to the Westport Boat Launch (as well, perhaps, as the Yacht Club and Water Treatment Plant) to look for migrant waterfowl and, if it looks like a good day for a hawk flight, then proceed to Coon Mountain, a fairly short, easy climb to a nice summit with a commanding view of the Adirondacks, the Greens and Lake Champlain. If the wind blows out of the north we could see very good numbers of migrating raptors.

If winds aren't favorable or if the weather threatens, we will bird the Westport and Essex farm fields and then head north to Noblewood, where we might catch some late migrating shorebirds or some early wintering arrivals, as well as lingering warblers.

**Time:** 9:00 a.m.**Location:** Westport Boat Launch**Leaders:** Pat & John Thaxton**Register** by calling Pat & John at (518) 576-4232; or [jpthax5317@gmail.com](mailto:jpthax5317@gmail.com)**Sunday, October 23, 2011**

**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 travelling 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**Leader:** Eileen Wheeler & Mary Beth Warburton**Register** by calling Eileen at (315) 386-2482 or email [eiwheeler@yahoo.com](mailto:eiwheeler@yahoo.com)**Saturday, November 5th, 2011**

**Arbutus Lake**  
**Newcomb**

Participants will hike 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:** 9:00 am**Location:** Adirondack Interpretive Center, 5922 State Rt 28N Newcomb, NY**Leader:** Charlotte Demers**Registration:** Email [cdemers@frontiernet.net](mailto:cdemers@frontiernet.net) or call the AIC: (518) 582-2000  
*Sulphur Lifecycle*

## A Note from the NNYA/Wild Center Naturalist Intern

My time here at The Wild Center has been one of the best experiences of my life. I have learned more about nature, the general public and green technology in the past 4 months than in the past 4 years. This summer I was able to apply my skills and learn new ones such as public speaking, program development, visitor services, and program implementation - all integral components of my future professional career.

I am currently pursuing a Masters degree in landscape architecture at SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry, with emphasis on wetland restoration and city parks. During my tenure at the Wild Center I saw a variety of reactions of our visitors to the world of natural history and green technology. For example, I experienced how empowering it is to present a person with knowledge which in turn changes their attitudes towards something like green technology. This exciting experience is one reason why I want to pursue my future career.

Previously I worked on a Spruce Grouse research project for New York State. While in the field, I learned a lot of bird calls. Some previous knowledge of birds and their calls came in handy here because one priority project was "Tweets and Treats". This was a bird walk that I lead with Julia (another intern) every Sunday morning at 8 am in June and July (a total of 9 walks) at The Wild Center, followed by coffee and pastries. This program helped me practice natural history interpretation to beginners as well as seasoned birders. Every walk was successful and we had a total of 38 participants (with lots of repeat visitors coming each week) with a total of 48 different species observed. The beginning birders inspired me and I taught them 2 songs by the end of each walk. The seasoned birders were a pleasure to have because it gave me a chance to learn more. I also was an assistant leader on offsite trips to Whiteface Mountain and Bloomingdale Bog. Whiteface is more of an alpine environment so we were able to see and hear birds such as the Bicknell's Thrush. The Bloomingdale Bog trips were excellent and many boreal birds decided to make an appearance. These trips were very popular - we had a waitlist for all of them!

In addition to Tweets and Treats, I created a number of other special projects and programs. These projects include creating a phenology chart for The Wild Center campus. Phenology is the study of periodic plant and animal life cycle events and how these are influenced by seasonal and variations in climate. In particular, this helped improve my wildflower ID skills through nature journaling, observing in the field and going out with experts. I have created and lead naturalist programs for the public focusing on Adirondack wildlife from fish to Spruce Grouse to turtles. It was fun coordinating the logistics of these programs as well as presenting to our visitors. As part of my training, I became a Certified Interpretive Guide through the National Association of Interpretation (a 36 hour course offered each spring at The Wild Center). Creating thematic programs has helped me become more focused and concise with talking to people and presenting information in an ex-



### *Meadow Fritillary Lifecycle*

citing and engaging way. These are all skills which I can apply to my professional career.

As Albert Einstein said "Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better"; I have had the unique opportunity to do that here at The Wild Center. I have buried myself in my natural surroundings and read more field guides during one summer than I can remember. I engaged myself with the public and really worked well with my colleagues. I couldn't have done this without the support of Northern New York Audubon and The Wild Center; I strongly appreciate all you have done and sincerely thank you!

**--Christina Domser**

SUNY ESF – Master in Landscape Architecture

## President's Message

I would like to again extend my sincere thanks to our members for their continued support of this organization. We had another successful raffle, the proceeds of which will help cover our operating costs, including the cost of newsletters, payment for our insurance, and contributions to education and conservation programs of the region.

I am also very thankful to Margo Ernst and Elk Lake Lodge for making this years raffle possible.

At the end of every summer I complete a report of our Chapter's activities over the past year. This years report is filled with the great things we have accomplished, including 33 bird walks that had over 150 participants. These walks were the result of over 55 hours of service from the people who volunteer their time to lead these programs. Through the generosity of the Joan and Joseph Cullman Foundation and now, through the gift from the estate of Nancy Smith Collins, we have contributed to and supported dozens of local conservation and education efforts. I am very proud of our organization and we will have the chance to showcase our accomplishments and our region at the Audubon Council of NYS Fall Council Meeting, October 21<sup>st</sup> – October 23<sup>rd</sup> at the Riveredge Resort in Alexandria Bay. Registration information will be published on our web site...members are welcomed and encouraged to attend. I hope to see some of you there.

**—Charlotte Demers**



*Monarch Egg Case*

### NNYA Annual Meeting/Outing

Eleven NNYA members met July 23rd at Robert Moses State Park in the Thousand Islands Region along the St. Lawrence River. We took advantage of the beautiful day by birding at several hotspots in the area, and then for some reason we all felt the gravitational pull of the pump-less Eisenhower Locks and repaired thither.

Never having seen the enormous lock work I wondered at how nothing more than gravity and a system of massive valves could raise and lower a two hundred-fifty foot tanker. President Charlotte Demers reported on some of the year's accomplishments, such as leading 33 birdwalks that attracted 150+ participants and required 60 volunteer hours; earning more than \$3,700.00 on this raffle; and successfully sending a young teenager to the DEC's Camp Colby. She then asked for a vote to authorize transferring the funds from the Nancy Collins bequest from the checking account to the Adirondack Community Trust.

Charlotte summarized some of NNYA's initiatives last year, from funding Project Silkmoth to the Wildlife Conservation Society's Bicknell's Thrush work to again funding half the cost of a Summer Naturalist Intern at The Wild Center. She also noted that at least two of our American Kestrel boxes worked beautifully and produced young.

Pat Thaxton reported that our annual appeal raised over \$7,000.00, that we now have 1,084 members and that more than 110 of them have opted to receive an email newsletter.

—JT

### NABA's 2011

#### Lake Placid Butterfly Count

This year's count, which was held on July 10, began very slowly but gradually became quite productive, eventually enabling participants to record 30 species, a number which is considerably above average for this count. A total of 350 individual butterflies were observed, the highest number ever reported since the count's inception in 1994. Most impressive was the virtual explosion of Atlantic Fritillaries, nearly three times as many as have been seen in any year. Numbers of Meadow Fritillaries and Cabbage Whites were also unusually high. Participants worked tirelessly to find the 30th species, a Northern Pearly-eye, which was finally spotted at the last stop at 6:10pm.

#### Totals:

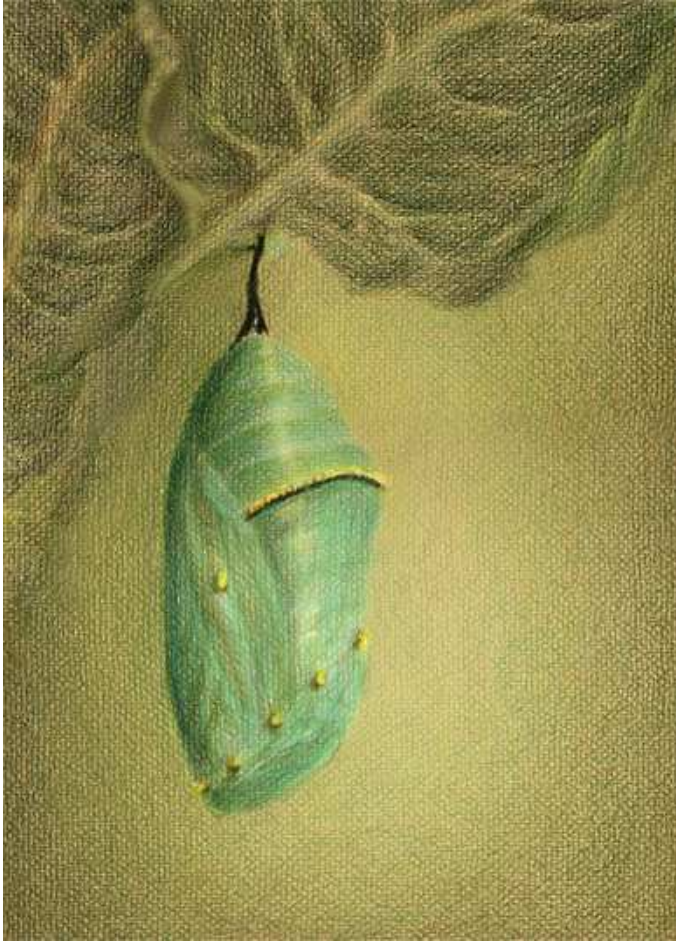
Canadian Tiger Swallowtail—23, Mustard White—2, Cabbage White—75, Clouded Sulphur—3, Orange Sulphur—3, Pink-edged Sulphur—4, Bog Copper—2, Coral Hairstreak—3, Striped Hairstreak—2, Great Spangled Fritillary—7, Aphrodite Fritillary—2, Atlantis Fritillary—62, Meadow Fritillary—18, Northern Crescent—11, Mourning Cloak—2, Milbert's Tortoise Shell—1, Painted Lady—2, White Admiral—18, Viceroy—2, Northern Pearly-eye—1, Eyed Brown—10, Common Ringlet—6, Monarch—5, Least Skipper—4, European Skipper—41, Peck's Skipper—13, Tawny-edged Skipper—3, Long Dash—11, Hobomok Skipper—1, Dun Skipper—5. **Unidentified:** Skippers-2; Fritillaries-2; Sulphurs-4

**Participants:** Dick Gershon, Leslie Gershon, Ted Mack, Larry Master, Lewis Rosenberg, Sheila Rosenberg, John Thaxton, Pat Thaxton, Nan Wilson

—Sheila Rosenberg

*Monarch Caterpillar*





*Monarch Chrysalis*  
**Poetry Corner**  
 # 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
 When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
 Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,  
 Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.  
 In me thou seest the twilight of such day  
 As after sunset fadeth in the west,  
 Which by and by black night doth take away,  
 Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.  
 In me thou seest the glowing of such fire  
 That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
 As the death-bed whereon it must expire  
 Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.

This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,  
 To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

--William Shakespeare

**National Audubon Society Email  
 Newsletter Drive**

The National Audubon Society asked local chapter leaders to try to shift away from paper newsletters to electronic newsletters in order to save money and protect the environment. NNYA sends out approximately 4,000 newsletters a year on 32,000 sheets of paper at a cost of nearly \$6,000.00.

Your requesting an electronic newsletter, published in full color, will save money and trees. —JT

**Become a Member of NNYA  
 Just \$15 a Year**

Benefits include: quarterly newsletter, field trips, Programs, website, Christmas Bird Counts and more...

Make Check Payable to Northern New York Audubon, Inc. and mail to:

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Rutkowski \_\_\_\_\_

Endowment \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me a full color, electronic edition (PDF) of the newsletter. \_\_\_\_\_

*Adult Monarch*



## Azure's Avian Life

Gazing out from the lonely summit of Azure Mountain, gives one a feeling of being on an isolated island overlooking a vast sea of wilderness. It is a magnificent vantage point for viewing the High Peaks to the southeast and out across the St. Lawrence Valley into Canada to the northwest. This remote peak with spectacular cliffs, located in the northwest section of the Adirondack Park, is a wonderful place to observe avian life. It is the wide variety of habitats that are encountered both on the drive along Blue Mountain Road, and on the hike up Azure Mountain's trail, that leaves birders with a long list of observed species.

Beginning in mid-April, warbler species, the colorful "butterflies" of the bird world, begin to return to their nesting areas. By late May, nineteen warbler species can be observed by stopping at wetland areas along Blue Mountain Road, coupled with the hike up Azure Mountain. One of the most beloved warbler species is the Mourning Warbler. It can be found on the side of the mountain above the stream crossing. In the same tangled habitat, Chestnut-sided Warblers, and the gorgeous Indigo Bunting, can also be observed. On a June climb up Azure in 2007, I was surprised to find that the small patch of spruce-fir habitat to the west of the tower was enough to support several high elevation Blackpoll Warblers. This species is a champion migrant that launches from northeastern North American in the fall and makes a nearly 4-day non-stop journey over the Atlantic Ocean to South America!

The boreal habitat at the parking lot is quite a contrast from the predominantly deciduous habitat encountered during most of the climb to the summit. Black-backed Woodpeckers can be observed foraging in the conifers along the parking area.

Also look for Golden-crowned Kinglets and Magnolia Warblers; the usnea-draped conifers attract Northern Parula. The boreal habitat at the trailhead also attracts finches. On a snowshoe climb of Azure in January 2006, I heard the sweet voice of a lovely Pine Grosbeak perched at the top of one of the tall spruces as I stepped out of the car. Pine Grosbeaks nest to our north, and they are one of several finch species that often "irrupt" in large numbers into our area for food during winter.

After leaving the boreal area for the trail, there is a dramatic change of habitat. A marshy area is traversed and leads into primarily deciduous forest, home to many woodpecker, flycatcher, vireo, warbler, and sparrow species. Barred Owls can occasionally be heard vocalizing during the day. The summit area is attractive to Cedar Waxwings, White-throated Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos.

The sheer cliffs off Azure's south side provide nesting habitat for Turkey Vultures, Peregrine Falcons and Common Ravens. The piercing scream of a juvenile Common Raven can be an unforgettable experience! The summit of Azure is known to be a terrific location to observe migrating raptors throughout the fall, particularly on the northwest winds that blow following the passage of a cold front. Over the years, I have observed fourteen raptor species from Azure's peak, including Golden Eagles, which are mid-to-late fall migrants. While on the summit in October 2007, an immature Golden Eagle suddenly appeared at eye level as it lazily rode a thermal up the southern cliff wall. It soared over me, and then headed on a direct line southeast toward the High Peaks. On this same outing, two American Pipits made a stop on the rocky summit during their trip south from the tundra.

Avian life on Azure is exciting year-round and there are always wonderful surprises on the journey.

—Joan Collins

### *Tiger Swallowtail Lifecycle*





*Silver-banded Hairstreak Lifecycle*

## Matt Young's 2011/12 Winter Finch Forecast

For months now birders have been noting what looks like enormous numbers of cones in coniferous trees. On a hike on Nun-da-ga-o Ridge recently I found myself trying to get on a bird only to get distracted by white spruces bristling with cones, and in the parking lot of a bank the other day I saw a northern white cedar plastered with a stupefying number of cones.

A prodigious cone crop bodes well for winter finch invasions, and I suggest bracing yourself for what promises to pan out as an outstanding winter for several irruptive species, in particular pine siskins and white-winged and red crossbills.

I base these prognostications on the work of Matt Young, the redoubtable finch forecaster from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Around this time of year Matt travels to different regions in New York and performs tallies of cones on several species of conifer. Matt visited the Adirondacks this August and rated the cone crop as good to excellent in eight of ten species.

On a scale of 1 to 5 (bad to excellent) Matt came up with the following cone evaluations: white spruce 4.75, Red spruce 4.5, black spruce 4.0, Norway spruce 4.75, balsam fir 4.5, northern white cedar 5, eastern hemlock 5, tamarack 4, eastern white pine 3.75, red pine 2.25. His conclusion:

“I strongly suspect that it will be at least a moderately good winter/spring breeding year across the Northeast for white-winged crossbill and siskin (white-winged crossbills could start nesting in Maine in July-Sept—keep an eye out). It will be a good breeding year for Type 1, the Appalachian Crossbill, from central New York southward to Georgia. Small numbers of Type 10 and a few Type 2 will be somewhere in the northeast.

“White-winged crossbills are already on territory in parts of New Hampshire and Maine, and I suspect some will start to turn up in the Adirondacks on territory by the end of August/first half of September. I was a little surprised I did not turn a few up in the Tahawus Road area where white spruce is quite common compared to other areas of the Adirondacks. If I were to predict, I’d say we’ll have a good breeding year for Pine siskin, white-winged crossbills, and many types of red crossbills (1,2,10 and perhaps 3) If I were to compare, I’d say it’ll end up being a better year than 2006-07 (which was a nice moderate invasion of siskins, white-winged crossbills, and red crossbills types 1, 3 and 10), but not quite as good a year for white-winged crossbills as 2000-01...BUT, it will be better for red crossbills than in 2000-01 when red were nearly non-existent in that amazing white-winged crossbill/siskin breeding invasion.” —JT

## Editor's Note

When high and low pressure start shoving each other around on the hill between Elizabethtown and Keene I not infrequently find myself driving through a windshield-wipers-on-high downpour into almost painfully pupil-constricting sunshine, and so it came to pass this very week that on the way home from Etown we drove up Spruce Hill through a deafeningly loud downpour into what struck me as a cartoonish parody of the gentlest of sun showers, a shimmering field of tiny raindrops absolutely luminous in the blinding sun, looking, for the life of me, like a blizzard of silver glitter. "Look behind you!" Pat suddenly exclaimed, "No, keep your eyes on the road look in the mirror it's the most beautiful rainbow I ever saw see it?"

Even in the rearview mirror the rainbow looked spectacular, as cartoonishly vivid as the raindrops before me, a fully arcing spectrum of stunningly saturated colors zooming out of the almost black sky like contiguous bands of funhouse neon, impossibly bright and contrasty, gaudy almost to vulgarity. Amazing. We drove past a couple standing on the side of the road, runnels of raindrops coursing down their faces, their smiles arcing ear-to-ear, staring, besotted, at the rainbow.

If my main prognosticator of Adirondack winter finch invasions, Matt Young, proves correct we will probably experience amazing numbers of pine siskins, and possibly white-winged and red crossbills, this winter; we have a bumper crop of cones this year, the best since 2000/01, and it bodes well for a season lousy with birds. Last time we had a major pine siskin invasion Channel 5 in Plattsburgh sent a crew to interview Pat and me about the Great Backyard Bird Count, and by way of ensuring we'd have some birds around the house Pat sprinkled thistle seeds along the entire forty-foot length of the deck railing. When I opened the door and went to shake the reporter's hand I encountered an astonished-looking stranger staring slack-jawed with amazement into the space beyond me: "Do they always line up like that?" he asked, looking at a row of 58 siskins feeding up on the railing.

I devoted some space to Matt Young's musings about cones and finches, including his evaluation of the Adirondack cone crop and his predictions about possible finch invasions—make sure to stock up on thistle and get ready to fill feeders with manic regularity. I remember skiing into Avalanche Pass and suddenly experiencing severe cramping in my left arm and a ringing in my ears, and as I imagined the obituary, "A cross-country skier with no history of heart trouble," I realized the ringing came from at least three white-winged crossbills singing all around me. I heard my lips click in a smile as I recognized the birds and realized my arm had a cramp from herringboning up the steepest part of the trail.

We have some lovely field trips lined up for the fall, from a visit to Arbutus Lake in the private Huntington Wildlife Forest to Wilson Hill and Robert Moses State Park along the St. Lawrence River, and I included inside Joan Collins' lovely essay about Azure Mountain, that remote northern Peak.

I also devoted quite a bit of space to Nan Wilson's gorgeous paintings of butterflies. Nan joined us on this year's Lake Placid Butterfly Count and, in a bog In Ray Brook, found a bog copper, a bug we really needed. Do yourself a favor and visit Nan's web site: [www.thistledownstudio.com](http://www.thistledownstudio.com) .

—**John Thaxton**