

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 42 Number 2

June-August 2014



The Joseph and Joan Cullman Conservation Foundation/Northern New York Audubon 2014 Great Adirondack Birding Celebration Lecture



The keynote speaker for the 2014 Great Adirondack Birding Celebration is Noah Strycker. His topic is “Bird World,” an exploration of the parallels between bird and human behavior. Approaching bird behavior from new and surprising angles, Strycker explores the astonishing homing abilities of pigeons, extraordinary memories of nutcrackers, self-image in magpies, life-long loves of albatrosses, particle physics of a starling flock and other mysteries—revealing why birds do what they do, and how we can relate. With humor and wit, and drawing deep from cutting-edge science and anecdotes from the field, Strycker’s presentation will leave you with renewed inspiration about our close connection with birds.

Strycker is Associate Editor of *Birding* magazine, former columnist known as *Birdboy* in *Wild Bird* magazine and a frequent contributor to other bird-related publications. His articles have appeared in *National Wildlife*, *Birder’s World*, *Bird Watcher’s Digest*, *Living Bird*, *Birds and Blooms* and *Popular Birding*, as well as in several field guides, government documents and other print media. Strycker spent three months, from November 2008 to January 2009, living and studying Adelie Penguins at Cape Crozier, Antarctica. He wrote about his experiences in his first book, *Among Penguins: A Bird Man in Antarctica*.

Strycker has lived in Amazonian Ecuador, the Australian Outback, the Farallon Islands and Costa Rica. He has also studied birds in Panama, Fiji, Mexico, New Zealand, Antarctica, Hawaii, Alaska, Maine, California, Michigan and Oregon. He consulted with Taiwan officials about the design of an ecotourism program and searched for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in Florida. His life-list is approaching twenty-five hundred birds, approximately one-fifth of the world’s species, on six continents. Strycker is recently back from Antarctica where he spent more time among the penguins.

Strycker’s second book, *The Thing with Feathers: The Surprising Lives of Birds and What They Reveal* was released in March, 2014. The book is an entertaining look at the lives of birds, illuminating their surprising world and deep connection with humanity. *The Thing with Feathers* reveals why birds do what they do and offers a glimpse into our own nature. Drawing from personal experience, cutting-edge science and colorful history, Strycker shows how our view of the world often, and remarkably, can be seen through the experience of birds.



1	Keynote Speaker: Noah Strycker
2	President’s Message: Camp for Educators Field Trip: Moose River Plains
2	Participate in the Annual Loon Census
3	Northern New York Audubon Annual Meeting/Outing: Clear Pond/Clear Mountain; Elk Lake Preserve
3	Field Trip: Roosevelt Truck Trail, Minerva
3	Nominations for NNYA Board of Directors
3	Field Trip: Huntington Wild Forest, Newcomb
3	BioBlitz: Pollinators and biotic interactions, Adirondack Interpretive Center
4	12th Annual Great Adirondack Birding Celebration
5	12th Annual Great Adirondack Birding Celebration
6	10th Annual Hamilton County Birding Festival
7	Book Review: The Sixth Extinction, by Elizabeth Kolbert
8	Editor’s Note

NNYA

Northern New York Audubon, Inc.

Board of Directors

Leah Valerio
President
Tupper Lake (518) 359-7800
Larry Master, PhD
Vice-President
Lake Placid (518) 645-1545
Leslie Karasin
Treasurer
Saranac Lake (518) 891-2193
Kathleen Wiley
Secretary
Keene Valley (518) 576-6405

Alan Belford Saranac Lake
Michael Burgesss, PhD Ausable Fks
Joan Collins Long Lake
Thomas Cullen Childwold
Charlotte Demers Newcomb
Lisa Godfrey Norristown, PA
Glenn Johnson, PhD Potsdam
Lewis Lolya Paul Smiths
Brian McAllister Saranac Lake
Melanie McCormack Keene
Peter O'Shea Fine
Angelina Ross Canton
Jacob Straub, PhD Plattsburgh
John Thaxton Keene
Pat Thaxton Keene
Mary Beth Warburton Potsdam
Eileen Wheeler Canton

Northern New York Audubon, Inc.
A chapter of National Audubon Society
serving the Adirondack, Champlain and
St. Lawrence regions of northern New
York, including Clinton, Essex, Franklin,
Hamilton and St. Lawrence counties.

Correspondence and Membership Information

Northern New York Audubon
PO Box 488
Keene Valley, New York 12943-0488

John Thaxton, Newsletter Editor
PO Box 488
Keene Valley, NY 12943-0488

NNYA Web Site: www.nnya.org
Charlotte Demers, Web Master

Northern New York Audubon Newsletter is
published by Northern New York
Audubon, Inc.

President's Message

I was fortunate to grow up with an in-house naturalist. My father, a biology teacher and avid outdoorsman, spent most of his free time taking me into the woods and teaching me all about the world around us. We caught frogs, studied tracks and looked for bird nests. His influence certainly molded the direction my life would take. I know that he did the same for many others as evidenced by the students who still call him and send him letters—even well into his retirement. An inspiring teacher can be the link that fosters the next generation of stewards. That is why Northern New York Audubon has decided to sponsor a local teacher to attend Audubon's Hog Island Educator's Week in Maine this summer. This week-long camp is designed to help educators learn practical approaches and add inspiration to their environmental education curriculum.

Interested educators should submit, by June 20th, a short letter of interest describing their teaching experience and how this camp would impact their professional development. Submit your letter to: lvalerio@wildcenter.org or via mail to Leah Valerio, PO Box 741, Tupper Lake, NY 12986.

Northern New York Audubon will cover the cost of registration and room/board; transportation costs to and from the camp are not included in this grant. For more information on the camp, check out: <http://hogisland.audubon.org/sharing-nature-educator-s-week>.

--Leah Valerio

Monday, July 14, 2014 Moose River Plains Birding Field Trip Inlet, NY

Time: 7:00 a.m.

Leader: Joan Collins

Meet: At Geiger Arena in Long Lake

Bring: Food, water, a jacket, appropriate attire/hiking shoes, binoculars, hat, sunscreen, bug dope

Registration: Call Long Lake Parks and Recreation Department:(518) 624-3077. Tour Moose River Plains on Long Lake's "Little Bus"! Joan Collins will lead a field trip to this Audubon designated Important Bird Area (IBA). There will be several stops with short hikes to look for birds in boreal and mixed forest habitats. We will hike near the Red River and a short distance on the Mitchell Ponds Trail. We will also hike two different scenic, short, handicap-accessible trails – one to Helldiver Pond and the other to Icehouse Pond. If time allows, we may hike the trail to Lost Ponds. There will also be a few roadside stops to listen for birds. There will be numerous outhouses available at Moose River Plains 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.

Participate in the Annual Loon Census on Saturday, July 19th from 8:00-9:00 a.m.

Help the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) look for loons, as part of the 13th Annual Loon Census. This year's Census is on Saturday, July 19th, from 8-9a.m. You can participate by observing loons by boat or on foot for one hour on census day. The data you collect will help assess New York's loon population. To sign up or learn more, please email adkloon@wcs.org or call [518-891-8872](tel:518-891-8872). For full details about the Annual Loon Census, visit www.wcsadironacks.org

Saturday, August 9th, 2014
Huntington Wildlife Forest
Newcomb

Time: 9:00 a.m.

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

Leader: Charlotte Demers

Registration: Email to aic@esf.edu or call the AIC at (518) 582-2000

A beautiful 2-3 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.

Monday, August 11, 2014
Roosevelt Truck Trail
Minerva, NY

Time: 7:00 a.m.

Leader: Joan Collins

Meet: Geiger Arena Parking Area in Long Lake

Bring: Food, water, a jacket, appropriate attire/hiking shoes, binoculars, hat, sun screen and bug dope

Register: Call Long Lake Parks/Recreation: (518) 624-3077.

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. Participants will also be looking for animal tracks – Black Bear and Moose tracks are frequently found on this old road. In August, the Roosevelt Truck Trail is a wonderful place to look for mushrooms and lichens. Meet at the Geiger Arena parking area in Long Lake at 7 a.m. for transportation to the trailhead on Long Lake's "Little Bus"! (There are two outhouses along the trail (at two handicap accessible camping areas available in summer)!) 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.

Nominations for the NNYA
Board of Directors

Liz DeFonce, Stacey McNulty, Kendra Ormerod for Vice President, Susan Wilson

Members are invited to participate in the vote at Paul Smiths VIC on Saturday, June 7th @ 1:00 p.m.



Find us on
Facebook

Sunday, July 20th, 2014
9:00 a.m.

Elk Lake Preserve
North Hudson, NY
Northern New York Audubon
Annual Meeting/Outing
Clear Pond/Clear Pond Mountain

Members will be gathering for the annual outing at Elk Lake Preserve on Sunday July 20th. There will be the option to hike around the perimeter of Clear Pond or to hike Clear Pond Mountain, which has spectacular views of the High Peaks. Later, we will gather for lunch and our annual meeting. **Meet at the Clear Pond Gate (look for NNYA signs). Bring a lunch, water, and appropriate apparel.**

Sunday, June 29th, 2014
(rain date June 28th)

9:00 a.m.
BioBlitz
Adirondack Interpretive Center
Newcomb, NY

The June 29th BioBlitz event will focus on pollinators and biotic interactions and include collecting at SUNY ESF's Adirondack Interpretive Center and surrounding locations, activities and workshops, and fun for all ages. We will also showcase bees collected by citizen scientists across the Adirondacks in May and June.

The event will feature a keynote talk by Dr. Sam Droege of the USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center. Dr. Droege is an ESF graduate whom the National Geographic Society recently honored with an article in their magazine that featured his stunning and scientifically-useful photography of bees.

One of the goals of this year's BioBlitz will be to gather regional data on pollinator distribution and spring phenology. These data will add significantly to the efforts of the Adirondack All Taxa Biological Inventory (<http://www.paulsmiths.edu/ATBI/>). The data we collect will provide baseline data for future research. We hope you can help contribute to, and learn about this effort by joining in our June Bioblitz.

At the BioBlitz, we will use up-and-coming tools such as *eBird*, *Butterflies and Moths of North America*, *iNaturalist*, *iMapInvasives* and *Nature's Notebook*. We will share these tools with Bioblitzers, provide instructions on their use, and highlight how they are contributing to regional data.

Interested in helping? Please RSVP to Ezra Schwartzberg (ezra@adkres.org) or David Patrick (dpatrick@paulsmiths.edu) so we can keep you informed about the event.

For regular updates visit <http://adkres.org/2014-bioblitz/>. Keep an eye on the weather and if Sunday looks rainy or thunder stormy call or email AIC Friday: (518) 582-2000 aic@esf.edu.

The 12th Annual Great Adirondack Birding Celebration

June 6th—June 8th 2014

At the Paul Smith's College VIC,
Paul Smiths, New York

Sponsored by:

Northern New York Audubon

Paul Smiths College

Adirondack Birding Center at the Paul

Smiths College VIC

Wild Birds Unlimited

Mac's Canoe Livery

Schedule of Events

Friday, 6 June

6:00—7:00: Continental Breakfast in VIC Great Room

9:00 AM – 5:00 PM: Check In/Registration/Materials (VIC Front Desk)

9:00 AM – 4:00 PM: **Birding Across the Adirondacks Field Trip** Participants leave the VIC for an all-day field trip “down the mountain” to the beautiful shoreline of Lake Champlain in search of migratory birds. This field trip will feature stops at many birding hotspots as we look at a cross-section of bird life from high elevation to low. Return to VIC at 4:00 PM. Preregistration required. \$70 extra.

9:00 AM—5:00 PM *Birds of a Feather Art Show and Sale*.

9:00 AM—4 PM: Essentials of Nature Photography Workshop (\$70 extra; 16 participants maximum)

2:30 PM—4:00 PM: Lecture TBA (\$5 a la carte).

4:00 PM—5:00 PM: Teddy Roosevelt Birding Challenge

Friday dinner on your own.

7:00 PM—8:00 PM: *Birds of the Adirondacks* slide show presentation.

Saturday, 7 June

6:00 AM – 7:00 AM: Coffee, tea, bagels, juice, snacks in the VIC Great Room

7:00 AM - 11:30 AM: **Field Trips** (preregistration required):

Bloomington Bog

Whiteface Mountain

Madawaska Pond

Intervale Lowlands

Little Clear Pond for Loons (canoes supplied)

Birding by Ear @ the VIC

Beginner Birder Workshop @ the VIC

9:00 AM—11:30: Heaven Hill Farm/ Henry's Woods (\$30)

9:00 AM—5:00 PM: Check in/Registration

9:00 AM—5:00 PM: *Birds of a Feather Art Show & Sale*

9:00 AM—5:00 PM: Vendors/Exhibitors in VIC Great Room

10:30 AM—12:00 PM: Bird Sketching Workshop (\$10, free for GABC registrants, Friends of the VIC)

11:30 AM - 1:30 PM - CATERED lunch at the VIC the Sunspace Gallery

1:00 PM - 2:30 PM: *Bird Sketching* (\$10 a la carte; free for GABC registrants, Friends of the VIC)

2:30 PM—4:00 PM: Lecture TBA (\$5 a la carte)

6:00 PM—7:00 PM: Coffee in the VIC Great Room Art show reception. (free)

Dinner on your own Saturday night

7:00 PM—8:00 PM: Keynote Lecture: *Bird World* by Noah Strycker, author of *The Thing with Feathers* (see front cover). (\$10 a la carte)

8:00 PM—8:30 PM: Reception, raffle drawing (free).

Sunday, 8 June

6:00AM—7:00AM Continental Breakfast in VIC Great Room

7:00AM—11:30AM Field Trips (preregistration required)

Bloomington Bog

Whiteface Mountain

Madawaska Pond

Intervale Lowlands

Little Clear Pond for Loons (canoes supplied)

Birding by Ear @ the VIC

Beginner Birder Workshop @ the VIC

9:00AM—11:30AM Heaven Hill Farm/Henry's Woods (\$30)

9:00AM—5:00PM *Birds of a Feather* Art Show/Sale

Field Trip/Workshop Descriptions

Birding by Ear at the Paul Smith's College VIC

Designated an Important Bird Area by the American Bird Conservancy, the Paul Smith's VIC property contains every habitat type found in the Adirondack Park with the exception of alpine vegetation. Included on the property is a 60-acre marsh, five ponds, several brooks and swamps, bogs, fens, and varied forest types, most notably northern boreal forest. The 14-mile trail system traverses a variety of habitats with extensive boardwalks through wetland ecosystems. Common sightings at the Paul Smiths VIC include: Wood Duck, American Black Duck, Great Blue Heron, American Bittern, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Black-backed Woodpecker. Warblers include (Yellow) Palm Warbler, Northern Parula, Blackburnian Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler and Nashville Warbler. Other sightings may include Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, and Wilson's Snipe, Broad-winged Hawk, Hooded Merganser, and Ring-necked Duck.

Beginner Birder Workshop at the Paul Smith's College VIC

You probably feed the birds in your backyard and enjoy the beauty they bring, but lately you've been asking yourself what the other birds are that visit the trees in your neighborhood during the spring and summer months. Well now's the chance to start learning those birds! Our Beginner Birder Workshop will take you step-by-step through the intricate lives of birds. Leaders will introduce field identification and song identification skills in a relaxed manner so you can fully absorb the intricacies of the lives of birds.



Birding Across the Adirondacks Field Trip

The focus of the all-day *Birding Across the Adirondacks* field trip will be the different habitats that make up the six-million acre Adirondack Park. We will depart from the Paul Smiths College VIC in vans at 9:00AM with lunch and beverages on board. Our first stop will be the boreal habitat of Bloomingdale Bog to search for birds typical of a boreal wetland, including the gray jay, black-backed woodpecker and olive-sided flycatcher. We will then stop to check for grassland species in the Lake Placid area, looking for bobolink, northern harrier, Savannah sparrow and several species of swallow. Then we will drop in elevation to the Lake Champlain valley to explore shoreline, open and scrub fields, wetlands, mixed woods and second growth forests. Here we expect to see blue-winged warbler, golden-winged warbler, marsh wren, Baltimore oriole, scarlet tanager and yellow-bellied flycatcher. We expect to tally some sixty species in these eight different habitat types. We will return to the VIC at about 4:00 PM. Our exact itinerary is subject to change. Bag lunch included.

Bloomingdale Bog / Bigelow Road

This is great habitat for boreal species. The area encompasses a bog and cedar woods with sedge marsh and coniferous woods. Sightings may include: Boreal Chickadee, Gray Jay, Black-backed Woodpecker, Palm Warbler, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Cape May Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, and Lincoln's Sparrow.

Intervale Lowlands

This 135 acre farm and nature preserve, includes 8,600' of frontage on the West Branch of the Ausable River in Lake Placid. With a mixture of young boreal forest and open fields, the "farm" is home to 17 species of breeding warblers. The Mourning Warbler is common, and the Cape May Warbler was confirmed nesting during the last atlas. Also found here are five species of nesting woodpeckers (including Black-backed), Brown Thrasher, Indigo Bunting, Lincoln's Sparrow, Alder Flycatcher, Turkey, Woodcock, and Ruffed Grouse. American Bitterns nest across the street; and Olive-sided Flycatchers and Rusty Blackbirds have visited. Nest boxes/platforms were put up for Ospreys, Kestrels, Bluebirds, Flickers, Hooded and Common Mergansers, Chickadees, and Barred and Saw-whet Owls. Bald Eagles fish the river on a weekly basis. Resident mammals include: Beaver, Coyote, Deer, and Bobcat. Moose, Bear, and Otter visit occasionally.

Little Clear Pond for Loons

Little Clear Pond is a haven for common loon with crystal clear water and healthy food sources for growing loon families. Dr. Nina Schoch is a wildlife veterinarian at Biodiversity Research Institute. She coordinates their Adirondack Center for Loon Conservation in New York's Adirondack Park. Dr. Schoch's research has focused on using Adirondack common loons as a sentinel species to better understand the impact of environmental contaminants on aquatic ecosystems. Schoch will lead us on a graceful, and educational paddle in search of these beautiful symbols of Adirondack wilderness. Canoes will be furnished, but you may bring your own canoe/kayak.



Intervale Lowlands photo by John Thaxton

Madawaska Flow

Madawaska has been a favored boreal birding area for a half-century or more. The area encompasses conifer forest, mixed hardwood forest, a variety of wetlands, as well as Madawaska Pond. Sightings may include: (Yellow) Palm Warbler, Lincoln's Sparrow, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Northern Parula, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Olive-sided Flycatcher. As the habitat changes to white pine forest, the Brown Creeper can be found nesting behind loose bark. Madawaska Pond may have Green-winged Teal, American Bittern, and Bald Eagle.

Whiteface Mountain

The trip will begin with a flat, easy walk around Lake Stevens Tree Trail at the Whiteface Mountain Memorial Highway toll house and then carpool up the toll road, stopping at pull-offs and searching for Bicknell's Thrush, Blackpoll Warbler, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher and Boreal Chickadee.

Intervale Lowlands photo by John Thaxton



10th Annual Hamilton County Birding Festival

June 13th—June 15th, 2014
Schedule of Events & Trips

Please Note:

Each of the outdoor trips will require different equipment necessary for a pleasant birding adventure. Suggested hiking equipment includes binoculars, camera, sunscreen, bug dope (netting or bug shirt suggested), water, snacks and/or lunch, flashlight (headlamp) and comfortable waterproof footwear. Registration is required for each outdoor event. Registration is appreciated but not necessary for any of our evening presentations. To register, call (800) 648-5239 or (518) 548-3076 Monday—Friday 9:00 AM—4:00 PM.

Friday, June 13th

Hike: Lows Ridge/Hitchens Pond, Long Lake 7:00 AM

A walk into beautiful Hitchens Pond and the Upper Dam on the Bog River. Common Loons nest on Hitchens Pond each year. Bald eagles are also a common sight.

Meet: Bog River Falls Parking Area, Route 421 (off Rt 30)

Walk: Ferd's Bog, Inlet 7:00 AM Ferd's Bog is a unique wildlife rich habitat surrounded by a 50-acre boreal forest. Short (0.3 mile) hike to see wood warblers and boreal birds from a floating walkway.

Meet: Raquette Lake Common School Parking Lot, northeast corner of Route 28 & County Road 2

Walk: Raquette Rail Bed, Raquette Lake, 10:00 AM This walk will follow the Ferd's Bog walk (see above). In 2013 we saw over 20 species during this walk alone.

Meet: Trailhead for Shallow Pond at the Browns Tract Upper Road.

Walk: Forked Lake Road, Long Lake, 2:00 PM A favorite—5th year in a row. This 2 mile walk on the Forked Lake Campsite road will bring us through a variety of woodland habitats. We could see a variety of woodland thrushes, and Gray Jays have been seen in the area.

Meet: Forked Lake Campground Parking Lot. Enter the campground from North Point Road.

Walk: Cedar River towards Pashley Falls, Indian Lake, 5:00PM Join us for a riparian walk (possible 3-4 miles round trip) in Indian Lake along the scenic Cedar River. This level walk follows a snowmobile trail through the woodlands next to the river.

Meet: Indian Lake Library Parking Lot on Pelon Road (off Route 28/30) in Indian Lake.

W.W. Durant Dinner Cruise, Raquette Lake, 6:30 PM

Join us on a very special cruise celebrating the Black Fly Challenge Mountain Bike Race and the Boreal Birding Festival. Boarding time is 6:00—6:30 PM and the cruise will last from 6:30—8:30 PM. You may also ride on the top deck of the Durant without the dinner. Cash snack and beverage bar as well as use of the restrooms (below) will be available to those riding on the upper deck. **Cost:** Upper Deck Cruise,

\$13 if pre-registered/\$15 normal rate if not; Dinner Cruise, \$37, includes meal, cruise, tax and tip. **Reservations:** Please call Raquette Lake Navigation directly at (315) 354-5532 to make reservations; visit www.raquettelakenavigation.com for more information .

Saturday, June 14th

Hike: Roosevelt Truck Trail, 7:00 AM This gently rolling trail passes 5 miles (round trip) through a pristine boreal forest; gray jay, boreal chickadee, black-backed woodpecker and Cape May are possibilities.

Meet: NP Trail parking lot on Rt 28 at Tarbell Hill Rd.

Hike: Lows Ridge/Upper Dam/Hitchens Pond, Long Lake 7:00 AM See description for Friday's trip.

Hike: Fiddler's Pond, Piseco, 7:00 AM A 3-mile hike (round trip) into wetland areas on the Northville/Lake Placid Trail along forest woodlands, marshland, meadows, a pond.

Meet: Town of Arietta Highway Dept Parking area, across from Casey's Corners Convenience Store.

Driving Safari: Perkins Clearing, Speculator 7:00 AM A search for warblers, flycatchers, buntings and grosbeaks.

Meet: Mason Lake parking area on west side of Route 30, north of Speculator.

Walk: G-Lake, Moorehouse, 7:00 AM A .5 mile hike into G Lake through a hardwood forest, the scenic lake..

Meet: Intersection of Rt 8 & G Road.

Driving Safari: Powley Road, Piseco, 2:00 PM A popular trip on a lightly travelled road (approximately 8 miles), with such possibilities as American three-toed woodpecker.

Meet: Intersection of Rt 10 & Powley Road, 1.2 miles south of the Route 8 & Route 10 intersection.

Presentation: 4:00 PM, *Boreal Species*

Adirondack Museum,

Guest Speaker: Joan Collins.

Saturday, June 14th

Sunday, June 15th

Driving Safari: Moose River Plains IBA, Inlet 7:00 AM

The roads, once used for logging make exploring this wilderness very easy, and the various habitats are home to almost every breeding species in Hamilton County.

Meet: Entrance to Limekiln Lake Campground, on Limekiln Road.

Walk: Northville-Lake Placid Trail, 7:00 AM A walk through a variety of habitats, including boreal forest, marsh/bog, swamp, mixed forest, deciduous woods and along a shore of Long Lake. We will look for black-backed woodpecker, boreal chickadee, yellow-bellied flycatcher, northern goshawk, bald eagle, common loon and many warbler species.

Meet: Parking Lot on south side of Rt 28N @ Tarbell Hill Rd

Road Walk: Indian River Parcel (former Gooley Club Lands), Indian Lake, 7:00 AM A walk through former Finch Pruyn Lands now owned by The Nature Conservancy, accessible to the public for the first time in 150 years. Hike through newly discovered boreal forests and hardwood stands and newly opened access roads through the Indian River Tract (part of Essex Chain of Lakes Tract).

Book Review

The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History by Elizabeth Kolbert

Henry Holt and Company, 2014

336 pages, \$28.00, Hardcover

Elizabeth Kolbert states that “If extinction is a morbid topic, mass extinction is, well, massively so.” Fortunately, she possesses a wonderful sense of humor, and oddly enough, even in a book on such a devastating topic, that humor was evident throughout the text.

At the end of the prologue of Kolbert’s *The Sixth Extinction*, she expresses her hope that readers “will come away with an appreciation of the truly extraordinary moment in which we live”. I vividly recall an extremely intelligent person expressing this feeling back in 1990 – that we are living during the most remarkable times of our specie’s history on the planet, but unfortunately, his life was cut short, and he was unable to see how it played out. Or, maybe, he was fortunate.

Kolbert describes a species that emerged roughly two hundred thousand years ago in eastern Africa – a “singularly resourceful” mammal that was not constrained by habitat or geography. This “ever inventive” species, *Homo sapiens*, even crosses the seas. Her book details the trail of extinction left by *Homo sapiens* and the current soaring rate of extinction underway as a result of human activity on Earth.

Kolbert weaves together a remarkable amount of scientific detail throughout the book. The five major extinction events that occurred during the last 500 million years are explained (causes including glaciation, climate change, and in the case of the late Cretaceous mass extinction, a six-mile wide asteroid that crashed into the present day Yucatan Peninsula at 45,000 mph – and one example of the results: it gave a Triceratops in Alberta 2 minutes before being vaporized). She points out the fantastic coincidence that just as we have an understanding of these mass extinction periods, we realize that we are in the midst of another – and this time, we are the cause.

Many of the scientific insights gained in the 19th and 20th centuries are highlighted such as evolution, natural selection, plate tectonics, and extinction. Before the 1800s, when humans found large animal bones such as Mastodon or Mammoth, they assumed the animals were still alive, only somewhere else. The concept of “extinction” is relatively new for humans and mostly thanks to a scientist, George Cuvier, who discovered and documented dozens of extinct animals during his lifetime.

Kolbert takes us to locations around the world that highlight extinct animals, nearly extinct animals, and to locations where scientists are studying the effects of climate change, deforestation, fragmentation of habitat, and ocean acidification and warming. She visits Panama where a chytrid fungus called *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd) has devastated the amphibian world. Many amphibian species are now extinct in the wild and ones that were quickly captured are living out their lives in tanks. Kolbert points out that the entire rain forest would need to be washed with Clorox to wipe out Bd, so the tank amphibians will never be released back into the wild. There are two theories on how this fungus quickly spread and they both involve humans moving frogs between continents. Amphibians are now the most endangered class of animals with a calculated extinction rate 45,000 times higher than the expected background rate (of one amphibian species every 1000 years).

The reader learns that all of the megafauna (huge, slow to breed creatures) extinction events (still going on today) across the world correlate to the arrival of humans. The trail of extinction grew long as *Homo sapiens* ranged across the Earth to other continents and remote islands. Kolbert quotes Alan Burdick, who called *Homo sapiens* “arguably the most successful invader in biological history”.

Kolbert visits Eldey, an island off Iceland, where the last pair of Great Auks (with an egg in their nest) was strangled by three men in 1844. She travels to several locations to explore ocean acidification and warming, explaining that 30% of the carbon added to the atmosphere by humans has now been absorbed by the oceans. Corals are second only to amphibians now as the most endangered life form. The forests of Peru and Brazil are highlighted. A scientist has been documenting the movement of tree species (over a thousand) to higher elevations in a mountain range of Peru. His study plots range from 11,320 feet to sea level. The average movement upslope is 8 feet per year, but one species is moving 100 feet a year, while some species are not moving at all (jeopardizing their future in this warming climate). The detrimental effects of habitat fragmentation are documented in a visit to Brazil. Kolbert also visits animals in zoos where scientists are desperately trying to increase numbers of animals such as the Hawaiian Crow, which is now extinct in the wild, and the Sumatran Rhinoceros, which is nearly extinct in the wild. Closer to home, Kolbert visits an old mine in the Adirondacks and a cave in Vermont to learn more about the tragic loss of bats to white-nose syndrome. In just a few years, the cave in Vermont, which used to have 300,000 hibernating bats in winter, plunged to merely a handful.

While much media attention has been given to the effects of climate change on the Arctic, the tropical areas are facing even more dire effects. Species in the rainforests of S. America are highly specialized and often limited in range, making them much more susceptible to extinction given any change in climate. While the boreal forest of Canada has 20 tree species that survive across four seasons, there are tens of thousands in S. America (with more discovered every year), highly specialized to specific climatic conditions.

By moving flora and fauna between continents, where invasive species often outnumber native species now, it is as if humans are reassembling (old) Pangaea into what Kolbert called “New Pangaea” (without the plate tectonics). Kolbert also details scientists new name for our era, “Anthropocene” based on the devastating human impact on the world. Humans have changed most of the Earth’s landscape through farming, grazing, mining, deforestation, habitat fragmentation, development of cities and roads, movement of flora and fauna, etc. Kolbert quotes Tom Lovejoy who wrote, “in the face of climatic change, even natural climatic change, human activity has created an obstacle course for the dispersal of biodiversity.” Human population is exploding - quadrupling in the past 100 years to 7 billion. And we are rapidly changing the atmosphere surrounding Earth by releasing carbon that has been sequestered underground for hundreds of millions of years. Kolbert says “we are running geologic history not only in reverse but at warp speed”. The rapid warming as a result of releasing so much carbon into the atmosphere is unprecedented in Earth’s history.

So how did we (humans) get to this moment and where are we headed? Kolbert reflects, “Though it might be nice to imagine there once was a time when man lived in harmony with nature, it’s not clear that he ever really did.” We know that Neanderthal man did live in harmony – for a very long period of time before being wiped out by *Homo sapiens* (after we interbred with them). The most fascinating chapter of the book was titled, “The Madness Gene” and describes a scientist’s endeavor to find out what changed in our genetic makeup that set our species down the path we have taken. As to where we are headed, Kolbert quotes Paul Ehrlich: “In pushing other species to extinction, humanity is busy sawing off the limb on which it perches.” Eventually, the human reign on Earth, and the sixth extinction event, will show up as no more than a cigarette paper-sized layer in the geologic record. Kolbert observes, “...in the amazing moment that to us counts as the present, we are deciding, without quite meaning to, which evolutionary pathways will remain open and which will forever be closed...and it will, unfortunately, be our most enduring legacy.” —**Joan Collins**

Editor's Note

I woke to the heat of the sun on my face and a luminous yellow glow I studied through closed eyelids, feeling rested and calm and in no hurry to experience anything else, only to flinch when a shadow lunged into my retinas, and then another and another, until the calm and luminous yellow glow somersaulted into a frenetic field of passerine penumbræ as scores of goldfinches scabbled at the feeder just beyond my bedroom window, hovering and fluttering like leaf shadows in strong wind or a storm of butterflies taking turns eclipsing the sunlight.

My April Fools Day awakening reverie segued into a roller coaster demonstration of the turbulent atmosphere of spring, complete with everything from sixty-five degree temperature changes over the course of thirty-six hours, all manner of sleety and snowy mixed precipitation and, well, cold, serious cold. We had fires in the woodstove through the first week in May and nary a new spring migrant in the yard, and then the wind shifted from the northwest to the southwest one night and the woods around the house filled up with the tentative tunes of the usual suspects—winter wrens and ovenbirds struggling to remember their songs, sounding like squeaky plumbing issues, and yellow rumps back in tune from note one.

By the middle of May Nashville and blackburnian and black-and-white held forth all around us, broad-winged hawks squealed high over head and female red-winged blackbirds and least flycatchers blew into Keene with a vengeance, making up for a late migration with a perching-room-only crowd.

After an excellent Friday morning of birding and a reluctant afternoon of car shopping, Pat woke me Monday morning announcing that numerous birders had sighted a garganey, an extremely rare Eurasian duck, a few miles north of Burlington, and so off we went, after a quick breakfast, only to arrive at the Ethan Allan Homestead to encounter a stream of disgruntled birders leaving the area—a couple of photographers, trying to get closer to the garganey, had flushed every duck in the flooded cornfield.

Pat hypothesized that the garganey, and the other ducks, mostly teal, would probably return later in the day, as they had fed and roosted there the night before, and after some rumination we decided to kill some time by going back into Burlington to visit the Subaru dealer there and perhaps get a better price than we got in Plattsburgh. The salesman zoomed right over to us and brought us into his office, and when he asked, enthusiastically, if we wanted to drive the Outback, I said, dismissively, “no.,” we were interested only in price. As we bargained I kept looking at my watch, wondering about what time we should leave to go back to the flooded cornfield, and seemingly completely removed from the bargaining process, a brilliant strategy, it turned out.

The Subaru salesman finally announced that his sales manager insisted on seeing every customer, and went to get him. The sales manager said, “What do we need to do to get you to drive out of here in this car?”

“The following,” I said, and he agreed. So we bought a new car, and then went back and got the duck.

—John Thaxton