

# High Peaks Audubon

Adirondack-Champlain 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 33 Number 2

March-May 2005

## April & May Monthly Program Meetings

Saturday, April 2, 2005

“The Glacial History of the Champlain Valley”

Lake Forest in Plattsburgh at 11 a.m.

Dr. David Franzi, of the Center for Earth and Environmental Science at Plattsburgh State University, will give a presentation on the glacial history of the Champlain Valley. Some of the most beautiful locations in the Champlain basin are also some of the most geologically significant; Altona Flat Rocks, Ausable Chasm, and the bluffs above the former Air Force Base, all are locations that have helped scientists understand the glacial history of this region. Dr. Franzi will discuss the fascinating geologic history of the Champlain Valley and how it shaped the region we know today.

Directions: Take the Northway to exit 35. Go east (right) on Bear Swamp Road for approximately 2.75 miles to Route 9. Take Route 9 north for approximately 7.5 miles to a right hand turn on Lake Forest Rd. (by a cemetery).

Refreshments will be served! This program is free and open to the public. For more information, contact Charlotte Demers at (518) 582-2157.

Saturday, May 21, 2005 & Sunday, May 22, 2005

“Conservation of the Spruce Grouse in the Adirondack Mountains”

Visitor Interpretive Center at Paul Smiths, 9 a.m.

Dr. Glenn Johnson and Angelena Ross will describe the current and historical status of the Spruce Grouse in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. Spruce Grouse is at the edge of its range in New York and has apparently been in decline since the heyday of softwood logging and other development in the late 1800s. In 1999, it was added to the state Endangered Species list. We will summarize recent findings of an ongoing research project on Spruce Grouse that is investigating its population ecology and fine-scale habitat associations in an effort to determine what conservation measures could, or should, be taken to ensure its continued presence in the boreal forests of the Adirondack Mountains.

After the presentation, Dr. Johnson and Ms. Ross will lead a field trip to Spring Pond Bog to see Spruce Grouse. The schedule will be the same on both Saturday and Sunday. This event is co-sponsored by High Peaks Audubon Society, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club, New York State Ornithological Association, and the Visitor Interpretive Center at Paul Smiths. See the field trip section for more details.



Spruce Grouse by George West



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## HPAS

High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc.

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High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc.  
A chapter of National Audubon Society  
serving the Adirondack/Champlain region  
of northern New York, including Clinton,  
Essex, Franklin and Hamilton counties.

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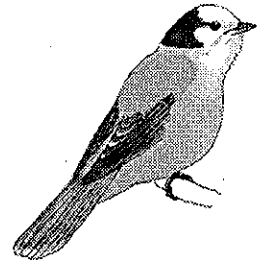
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## "Hamilton County Birding Festival" June 17 through June 19, 2005

Hamilton County Tourism is sponsoring the first "Hamilton County Birding Festival" the third weekend in June! There are many exciting activities planned throughout the scenic, vast wilderness of Hamilton County, including field trips, speakers, workshops, and exhibits. Evening presentations will include: Loons, Loon Banding, Mountain Birdwatch Program, High Elevation Species, Photography Seminar, Songbirds of the Adirondacks, and Important Bird Areas of New York State. Workshop topics: Bird Carving Demo, Photography, Birds of Prey Exhibit, and Adirondack Warblers. Exhibits at the Adirondack Lakes Center for the Arts will feature Jeff Nadler's Nature Photography and Ellen and Rick Butz's award winning Bird Carvings.



Gray Jay by George West

### Field Trips include:

- Loon Watching on Moss Lake
- Nature Bird Walk on the Sacanadaga Pathway
- Ferd's Bog (Two Trips)
- Blue Mt.
- Perkins Clearing Road
- Northville-Placid Trail (N and S) in Long Lake (Two Trips)
- Canoe Trip in the William C. Whitney Wilderness Area
- Northville-Placid Trail to Fiddler's Pond in Piseco
- Bird Hike to Beaver Brook in Raquette Lake
- Driving Safari on Powley Road in Piseco
- Night Owl Hoot and Coyote Howl in Moose River Plains
- Moose River Recreation Area
- Canoe Trip on Cedar River in Indian Lake
- Canoe/Kayak Trip on the Kunjamuck River in Speculator
- Canoe/Kayak Trip on the West Branch of the Sacanadaga River

For information on where to stay, and to register, call Hamilton County Tourism, Festival Sponsor, at (800) 648-5239 or (518) 648-5239. For detailed activity information, and for special "hot deals and packages" lodging information, visit the Hamilton County Tourism's "Hamilton County Birding Festival" web site at: [www.adirondackbirds.com](http://www.adirondackbirds.com). More details to follow in the next newsletter issue!

*(Spruce Grouse continued from page 11)*

Dr. Glenn Johnson is an Associate Professor at SUNY Potsdam, where he is currently Chair of the Biology Department. He teaches courses in ecology, vertebrate biology and conservation biology. He earned his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from the SUNY College of Environmental Science in Syracuse, where he worked on the conservation of threatened species in New York, including Red-shouldered Hawks and massasauga rattlesnakes. In addition to his collaborative efforts with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation on the spruce grouse, Dr. Johnson has a long-term project on the conservation of the state-listed Blanding's turtle in St. Lawrence County.

Ms. Angelena Ross is an M.S. candidate in wildlife and conservation biology at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, working with Dr. James Gibbs and Dr. Johnson on the Spruce Grouse project. She is a graduate of SUNY Potsdam, where she earned a bachelor's degree in both Biology and Geology. She has spent the last three field seasons chasing Spruce Grouse around New York bogs and was also an intern with the Arizona Fish and Game Department, working on projects with Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls and Northern Goshawks. Ms. Ross is originally from Amsterdam, New York.

## March, April, & May Bird Walks

**Saturday, March 19, 2005**

### **Snowshoe the Northville-Placid Trail (S)**

Route 28N Trailhead in Long Lake

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

**Distance:** 2 miles round trip

**Hike Leaders:** High Peaks Audubon Society members  
Amy & Steve Freiman

**Register** by calling the Newcomb VIC at (518) 582-2000  
Jointly sponsored by High Peaks Audubon Society, and the  
Visitor Interpretive Center at Newcomb.

**Saturday, April 30, 2005**

### **Hike the Northville-Placid Trail (N) to Catlin Bay on Long Lake**

Tarbell Hill Road Trailhead in Long Lake

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

**Distance:** 2.2 miles round trip

**Hike Leaders:** High Peaks Audubon Society members  
Joan Collins & Amy Freiman

**Register** by calling the Newcomb VIC at (518) 582-2000  
Jointly sponsored by High Peaks Audubon Society, and the  
Visitor Interpretive Center at Newcomb.

**Saturday, May 14, 2005**

### **Hulls Falls Road**

Keene Valley

**Time:** 7:30 a.m.

**Meet:** Gather at the Marcy field end of Hulls Falls Road.

**Leader:** High Peaks Audubon Society member Ruth  
Kuhfahl (518)

No need to sign up ahead!

Jointly sponsored by the Hurricane Chapter of the  
Adirondack Mountain Club and High Peaks Audubon  
Society.

**Saturday & Sunday, May 21 & 22, 2005**

### **Spring Pond Bog**

**Time:** 10 a.m.

**Meet:** Visitor Interpretive Center at Paul Smiths VIC  
(following the 9 a.m. lecture)

**Hike Leaders:** Glenn Johnson and Angelena Ross

**Registration required** by calling the Paul Smiths VIC at  
(518) 327-3000. Register for either Saturday or Sunday.  
Jointly sponsored by High Peaks Audubon Society, the New  
York State Ornithological Association, the Hudson-  
Mohawk Bird Club, and the Visitor Interpretive Center at  
Paul Smiths.

## April Board Meeting

**T**he April Board of Directors meeting will be held on  
Saturday, April 2, 2005 from Noon to 2 p.m. at Lake  
Forest in Plattsburgh following the 11 a.m.  
presentation by David Franzl on the "The Glacial History of  
the Champlain Valley". Members are welcome.

## "Adirondack Birding Celebration"

**June 2, through June 5, 2005**

**Saranac Lake**

**Activities:**

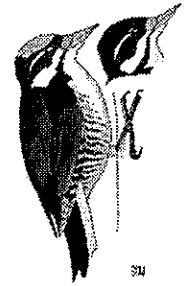
**Field Trips**

**Speakers**

**Vendors**

**Workshops**

**Saturday Evening Banquet**



*Black-backed Woodpecker by  
George West*

The third annual "Adirondack Birding Celebration" is  
jointly sponsored by the Adirondack Park Agency's Visitor  
Interpretive Center at Paul Smiths, the Saranac Lake  
Chamber of Commerce, and High Peaks Audubon Society.  
HPAS has once again organized the Celebration field trips.  
This year, there are nine different field trips offered (5 on  
Friday, and 7 on Saturday), including two canoe trips! Here  
is the field trip schedule:

**Friday, June 3, 2005**

- **Bloomingdale Bog/Bigelow Rd.**
- **Whiteface Mt.**
- **Silver Lake Bog**
- **Old Growth Forest walk on the lower  
portion of the Ampersand Mt. Trail**
- **Little Clear Pond Canoe (Adirondack  
Cooperative Loon Program research lake)**

**Saturday, June 4, 2005**

- **Bloomingdale Bog/Bigelow Rd.**
- **Whiteface Mt.**
- **Hurricane Mt.**
- **Paul Smiths VIC Boreal Life Trail**
- **Osgood River Canoe**
- **Old Growth Forest walk on the lower  
portion of the Ampersand Mt. Trail**
- **Spring Pond Bog**

More detailed information will follow in the June-August  
issue of *High Peaks Audubon Newsletter*.

To register, call the Saranac Lake Chamber of Commerce at  
(800) 347-1992 or (518) 891-1990. Visit the Saranac Lake  
Chamber of Commerce Adirondack Birding Celebration  
web site for a list of events at: [www.saranaclake.com/  
abc.shtml](http://www.saranaclake.com/abc.shtml).

## Volunteers Needed For Adirondack Breeding Bird Surveys

**D**o you enjoy early summer birding, perhaps accompanied by a friend? Do you get satisfaction from volunteering your time and talents to worthwhile projects? For the 2005 field season, New York State needs several volunteers to take responsibility for Breeding Bird Survey (BBS) Routes that have not been covered for the past three years or more. The Breeding Bird Survey is different from a Breeding Bird Atlas. A Breeding Bird Atlas typically provides information about the geographic distributions of breeding birds within a state or province, without counting those birds. For the BBS, birds are counted and valuable information about their population trends over time can be derived from those counts of birds. The BBS provides information about abundance, while a Breeding Bird Atlas provides information about geographic distribution. Both kinds of information are important for assessing the status and conservation needs for breeding birds. Now that our New York State Breeding Bird Atlas nearly is finished, perhaps we can improve our BBS coverage. The Adirondacks is a unique North American BBS ecoregion, and the National BBS Office is especially interested in achieving 100% coverage for that region.

With "retirements" of several long-time observers and other sources of attrition over the past few years, participation in the BBS Program in NY is at an all-time low. We especially need observers in the Adirondack Region. Those orphaned Adirondack routes available for adoption include the following:

Route Name (County)	Route Number	Last Covered	USGS Map Quadrangle
Number Four (Herkimer)	077	1998	Number Four
North Wilmurt (Herkimer)	078	1998	North Wilmurt
Old Forge (Herkimer)	082	1996	Old Forge
Speculator (Hamilton)	085	1996	Wells
Hope Falls (Hamilton)	086	1995	Hope Falls
Waddington (St. Lawrence)	095	1998	Waddington
Ogdensburg (St. Lawrence)	096	2000	Ogdensburg East
Wanakena (St. Lawrence)	098	2000	Newton Falls
Parishville (St. Lawrence)	102	1997	Parishville
Hopkinton (St. Lawrence)	103	1990	Nicholville
West Bangor (Franklin)	105	1999	Bangor
Underwood (Essex)	106	1996	Underwood
Sciota (Clinton)	112	1998	West Chazy

**Note:** Starting points usually are at or near a mapped location corresponding to the Route Name. The National BBS Office at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center will send you maps for the route(s) you choose to run.

To be qualified to be responsible for one or more BBS Routes, you have to be able to identify correctly all species of birds that you are likely to see or hear on your assigned route. Ideally, a volunteer observer will be able to do the same route each Summer for several years. (I've been doing a BBS Route along the Uncas Road, near Ferd's Bog, continuously for nearly 30 years.) All instructions, maps, and reporting forms are mailed to you each year by the National BBS Coordinator. Each survey is established along a predefined automobile route. All routes are 24.5 miles in length. The procedure requires that you start 30 minutes before official local sunrise, drive your assigned route, stopping every one-half mile, listening and watching for exactly three minutes, and counting and recording all individuals of every species of bird you see or hear. This is not an activity for the inexperienced or casual field observer. Surveying your NY route will require about four hours of field work on one day during the month of June, and completing the reporting forms that summarize the information you collect will require another hour or two of homework. You can be satisfied that your efforts will be a worthwhile contribution to the best source of information in existence today, relating to the status of North American breeding bird populations.

Breeding Bird Surveys began in 1965 under the sponsorship of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and with the able leadership of Chandler S. Robbins. As a result of a series of administrative and Congressional decisions during 1995 and 1996, BBS now is a part of the Inventory and Monitoring Section of the Biological Resources Division of the U.S. Geological Survey, but its goals and many of its staff have remained unchanged. More than 3000 BBS Routes now exist in North America, North of Mexico. Information from BBS routes is useful for determining whether breeding bird populations are showing increasing or decreasing trends - information that is vital for responsible management of our vast and varied avian resources. In the scheme of BBS coverage for North America, New York is an important state. Many of the procedures used by BBS were field tested by volunteers in NY and Maryland in 1965. New York also has a BBS route density of eight routes per degree block of latitude and longitude. The only other states with higher route densities per degree block are Maryland and Delaware. Those of you with Internet access can find excellent summaries of BBS information, including up-to-date color range maps for breeding bird species, at the following Internet web site: <http://www.mbr-pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/>. The

BBS web site is a sophisticated site that also gives you opportunities to take quizzes or to do custom, interactive analysis of your own, if you choose to do so. Access to the site and the massive amount of information it contains is free to anyone with Internet access. Go try it out.

If you are interested in adopting any of the orphan routes listed here, and if you meet the qualifications outlined above, please contact your State BBS Coordinator, Charles R. Smith, Department of Natural Resources, Fernow Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-3001 (phone: 607-255-3219, e-mail: crs6@cornell.edu), before 15 May, in order to be considered for this year's survey. If you choose, you can have the satisfaction of contributing to a truly worthwhile, long-term project that serves as an important and unique information resource for real, science-based bird conservation efforts.

### Mountain Birdwatch Peaks Need Adoption

The Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS) launched Mountain Birdwatch in the spring of 2000 in order to establish a long-term monitoring program for Bicknell's Thrush and other montane forest birds. From the Catskills to Mount Katahdin, trained volunteers conduct dawn surveys along foot trails that pass through some of the region's most awe-inspiring forests. The typical time commitment is one to two mornings each June, with overnight camping recommended on remote routes. Participants receive training in bird identification, experience the thrill of alpine adventure, and help guide the stewardship of vulnerable mountain habitat. Results are used to measure population trends, monitor changes in bird distribution, identify conservation opportunities, evaluate proposed development, and project effects of climate change on mountain songbirds.



Bicknell's Thrush by George West

The following routes in New York State *may* be available:

Catskills:	Adirondacks:
Balsam	Crane
Balsam Lake	Hamilton
Black Head	Hopkins
Slide	Morris
West Kill	Phelps
Wittenberg	Weston

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer for the Mountain Birdwatch project, please contact Dan Lambert at 802-457-2779 ext. 132 or [dlambert@vinsweb.org](mailto:dlambert@vinsweb.org). For more information about Mountain Birdwatch, visit the following web site: [www.vinsweb.org/cbd/mtn\\_birdwatch.html](http://www.vinsweb.org/cbd/mtn_birdwatch.html).

## The Boreal is for the Birds – and the Botanists

Ask any avid birder or botanist in the Adirondacks where to find an Olive-sided Flycatcher or a pitcher plant, and you are likely to get pointed towards one of the Park's boreal habitats. These cold, wet locales are characterized by coniferous trees, sphagnum moss, and some of our most characteristic Adirondack flora and fauna. With good reason, it is places like Madawaska and Ferd's bog that are teeming with birders every summer looking for the elusive Three-toed Woodpecker; these binocular-bedecked enthusiasts would have to travel far afield to find these species outside of the Adirondack's boreal zone, where many species exist at the southern limit of their ranges.

Disjunct from the great boreal forests of Canada, the Adirondacks harbor a significant amount of area that can be described as having a truly northern character. WCS is working to better understand these habitats and their inhabitants. In the process, we hope to learn more about the threats they face, particularly climate change, which is a special concern in these southern relics.

The first job in studying and protecting the boreal is to identify what it is. Is the boreal characterized primarily by its flora? How big is the boreal? Are there boreal mammals in the Adirondacks? Jerry Jenkins, primary author of *The Adirondack Atlas* and well-known Park ecologist, has been spending time in the Adirondack boreal zone for decades. Recently, through a partnership with the Adirondack Nature Conservancy, Jerry has been working on a report in two parts that will summarize his knowledge from years of field surveys of the plant communities of our boreal habitats, the dynamics of these unique areas, and some thoughts about their future and will describe his thoughts on the "state of the Adirondack boreal."

In a related project, WCS is working to assess the general abundance and distribution of a suite of 10 bird species iconic of the boreal habitat. Over the past two summers, Michale Glennon, Brian McAllister, and other WCS staff have conducted surveys at approximately 35 characteristically boreal sites, most in the northwest region of the park. With funding through the State Wildlife Grants program, this work will continue at a larger scale for the next 3 years. Some of these bird species targeted in this study have been shown to be in decline in recent years, for reasons unknown, and we hope that this work will give us an enhanced understanding of the status and health of boreal bird population in the face of threats such as climate change.

Given the uniqueness and relative scarcity of our boreal habitats in the Adirondacks and the northeastern US, we look forward to increasing our knowledge of the flora and fauna of boreal habitats so that we may contribute toward their long term preservation.

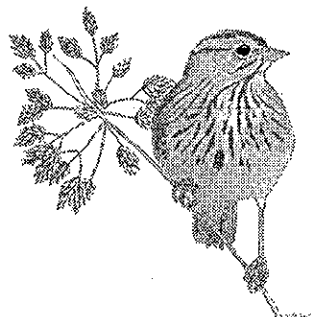
*Reprinted with permission from the Wildlife Conservation Society.*

## The Wildlife Conservation Society's Adirondack Communities and Conservation Program Job Announcements

**T**he Adirondack Communities and Conservation Program of the Wildlife Conservation Society works to promote healthy human communities and wildlife conservation in the Adirondacks through an information-based and cooperative approach to research, community involvement, and outreach. We work to generate and disseminate objective information to a wide range of stakeholders on a number of important issues such as human – wildlife conflicts; protecting loons through a public education campaign and research on airborne pollutants, fishing, and lakeshore development; and monitoring the impacts that all-terrain vehicle use and road development have on wildlife in the Adirondacks.

**Position A:** Summer Intern(s), stipend available. WCS is seeking experienced birders to help with a research project examining the abundance and distribution of a suite of boreal birds throughout the Park.

**Job Description:** Summer intern will conduct 10 minute point count surveys at a variety of locations to assist in collecting abundance and distribution data for the following species in the Adirondacks: Three-toed Woodpecker, Black-backed Woodpecker, Rusty Blackbird, Lincoln's Sparrow, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher,



*Lincoln's Sparrow by George West*

Olive-sided Flycatcher, Palm Warbler, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, and Spruce Grouse. Intern will conduct standard point counts of 10 minutes divided into 3 time intervals, during which the observer will note and map all species detected, their location relative to a 50m radius of the point count center, and their activity (i.e., singing, calling, individual seen). Locations will be spread primarily throughout western portion of the Adirondack Park but have not yet been completely determined. Many points will be surveyed on foot along trails, but some points are better surveyed with a canoe or kayak. Intern will also assist in collection of basic habitat data at a subsample of the point count locations.

**Qualifications:** Self-motivated, professional, able to work independently in remote locations. Birding skills and familiarity with Adirondack species required. Hiking, navigation, and GPS experience preferred. Some weekend and overnight work may be required; overall schedule is fairly flexible. Travel around the Adirondacks required; own transportation is necessary, travel costs will be reimbursed.

**Position B:** Short-term Bicknell's Thrush intern(s), stipend available. WCS is seeking experienced birders to help with a research project examining the effects of ski area development on Bicknell's thrush on Whiteface Mt.

**Job Description:** Summer intern(s) will conduct 10 minute point count surveys at a variety of locations on Whiteface Mt to detect presence of Bicknell's Thrush, Swainson's Thrush, Blackpoll Warbler, White-throated Sparrow, and Winter Wren. Intern(s) will conduct standard point counts of 10 minutes divided into 3 time intervals, during which the observer will note and map species detected, their location relative to a 50m radius of the point count center, and their activity (i.e., singing, calling, individual seen).

**Qualifications:** Self-motivated, professional, able to work independently in remote locations. This work involves difficult terrain and bushwhacking through fir waves and other disturbance zones in the high elevation Bicknell's thrush habitat on Whiteface, and therefore requires a positive attitude and willingness to travel and work very early in the morning in difficult locations. Birding skills and familiarity with the aforementioned species required. Hiking, navigation, and GPS experience preferred. Some weekend and overnight work may be required. All surveys will take place during the first 15 days of June, 2005.

**Please send, e-mail, or fax resume and letter of interest by April 1 to:**

Michale Glennon, Wildlife Conservation Society, 7 Brandy Brook Ave. #204, Saranac Lake, NY 12983  
phone: (518) 891-8872  
fax: (518) 891-8875  
email: [mglennon@wcs.org](mailto:mglennon@wcs.org)  
For information about our programs visit: [www.wcs.org/adirondacks](http://www.wcs.org/adirondacks).

### Education Updates

- Ellen Rathbone, HPAS Education Chair, is working with the Town of Newcomb to establish a Bluebird Trail along the new golf course in that town. The Newcomb Central School Technology teacher offered to have his students build the nest boxes. Ellen supplied the nest construction plans to the teacher, and will work with the children to erect and monitor the Bluebird houses.
- Joan Collins presented a Powerpoint slide show on Eastern Bluebirds to the seventh grade at Long Lake Central School this past fall. Teresa Taylor, Long Lake Parks and Recreation Dept., suggested the idea of building Bluebird nest boxes to the Technology teacher at the school. Teresa is also planning a Bluebird nest box construction workshop for children of all ages in March.
- Amy Freiman, HPAS Treasurer, donated Project Feederwatch materials to the Newcomb Central School last fall.



## Hints to Observers (from 1889!)

From *Birds Through an Opera Glass* by Florence A. Merriam, 1889

**W**hen you begin to study the birds in the fields and woods, to guard against scaring the wary, you should make yourself as much as possible a part of the landscape. Most birds are not afraid of man as a figure, but as an aggressive object.

The observance of a few simple rules will help you to be unobtrusive.

- *First.* Avoid light or bright-colored clothing. A dull-colored jacket and an old leaf-colored hat that you can pull over the eyes or push back from the face as the light requires, will do excellent service if you do not wish a complete suit.
- *Second.* Walk slowly and noiselessly. Among the crisp rattling leaves of the woods, a bit of moss or an old log will often deaden your step at the critical moment.
- *Third.* Avoid all quick, jerky motions. How many birds I have scared away by raising my glass too suddenly!
- *Fourth.* Avoid all talking, or speak only in an undertone—a most obnoxious but important rule to young observers.
- *Fifth.* If the bird was singing, but stops on your approach, stand still a moment and encourage him by answering his call. If he gets interested he will often let you creep up within opera-glass distance. Some of the most charming snatches of friendly talk will come at such times.
- *Sixth.* Make a practice of stopping often and standing perfectly still. In that way you hear voices that would be lost if you were walking, and the birds come to the spot without noticing you when they would fly away in advance if they were to see or hear you coming toward them.
- *Seventh.* Conceal yourself by leaning against a tree, or pulling a branch down in front of you. The best way of all is to select a good place and sit there quietly for several hours, to see what will come. Then you get at the home life of the birds, not merely seeing them when they are on their guard. A low stump in a raspberry patch and a log in an alder swamp prove most profitable seats.

In going to look for birds it is important to consider the time of day, and the weather. Birds usually follow the sun. In spring and fall you will find them in the fields and orchards early in the morning, but when the sun has warmed the south side of the woods they go there; and in the afternoon they follow it across to the north side. During heavy winds and storms you are most likely to find birds well under cover of the woods, no matter at what time of day; and then, often on the side opposite than from which the wind comes.

For careful observation in general, three rules may be given.

1. In clear weather be sure to get between the sun and your bird. In the wrong light a scarlet tanager or a bluebird will look as black as a crow.
2. *Gaze.* Let your eyes rest on the trees before you and if a leaf stirs, or a twig sways, you will soon discover your bird. At a little distance, it is well to gaze through your glass.
3. Beware of the besetting sin of observers. Never jump at conclusions. Prove all your conjectures.

*Editor's note: Thanks to Ellen Rathbone, who submitted this wonderful historical excerpt for the Newsletter!*

### Poetry Corner

#### The Darkling Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate  
When Frost was spectre-gray,  
And Winter's dregs made desolate  
The weakening eye of day.  
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky  
Like strings of broken lyres,  
And all mankind that haunted nigh  
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be  
The Century's corpse outleant,  
His crypt the cloudy canopy,  
The wind his death-lament.  
The ancient pulse of germ and birth  
Was shrunken hard and dry,  
And every spirit upon earth  
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among  
The bleak twigs overhead  
In a full-hearted evensong  
Of joy illimited;  
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,  
In blast-beruffled plume,  
Had chosen thus to fling his soul  
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings  
Of such ecstatic sound  
Was written on terrestrial things  
Afar or nigh around,  
That I could think there trembled through  
His happy good-night air  
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew  
And I was unaware.

*Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) 1900*

## Essay Contest Winners Announced!

This summer, Nathan Woods of Keene, NY will attend Camp Colby, and Woody Cyr of Warrensburg will attend Camp Pack Forest. Congratulations to Nathan and Woody! Here are their essay submissions:

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I've been to Camp Colby twice before. It was really fun both times and I'd really like to go again. The first year, I stayed in the cabin called "Haystack" and my counselor was Tom. Kirk was Director and Pouchard was Assistant Director. We went on a canoeing day trip to Eagle Island and had lunch there. I was afraid of the canoe flipping, but it didn't, nor did anyone else's. Our overnight trip was just to a site along the Main Trail. I was hoping to get the top bunk, but I didn't. I also took my hunter safety course. We had a lot of fun doing it, too. We shot .22 rimfire rifles at targets and 20-gauge shotguns at clay pigeons. I passed the test, it was really easy. I didn't make many friends the first time, unfortunately.

The second year, it was pouring rain at registration. We had to move up to the barn for registration and there I found out that the bow-hunting safety course was full. This was the part of camp that I had been looking forward to most and it wasn't going to happen. Then, at the first circle-up, two people had decided not to take the course, so I was allowed to fill in for one of them! I was in Scarface cabin that year, and my counselor was Theo. I got along well with all the guys in my cabin. I made some new friends that year. We went on the overnight trip differently this year. We rode in a van to a river, put our canoes in, and paddled through two rivers and a lake to get to our campsite, only to find that it was already occupied by deaf people. We had no way to tell them to leave, so we shared another Camp Colby group's site. I passed the bow-hunting test too. I still talk with a few people from Camp Colby over the internet with Instant Messenger. I'd love to go back this year and meet some new people and have another great experience.

*By Nathan Woods, Keene, NY*

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I attended Camp Pack Forest in 2004. The lessons that were taught by the counselors taught us through fun about the natural world all around. The overnight hike that we took to Sleeping Beauty Mountain and Fishbrook Pond was awesome as well. Also, in 2001, I attended Camp Colby. Both of these weeks at camp have caused my knowledge of the environment to be furthered much more quickly than it would have been otherwise.

My favorite hobbies all involve the outdoors. They include whitewater kayaking, fishing, camping, hiking, fly-tying, backcountry skiing, and alpine skiing. This summer, I also had the opportunity to try rock climbing, which I thoroughly enjoyed. I am also beginning to research bow hunting for white tailed deer by reading and talking to people with experience in hunting. This way, next season, I will be

prepared to enjoy this new hobby.

This is also my fourth year in the 4-H Adirondack Guide Program. This year, I became a senior guide, and the highest level possible in the program. In addition to this, I received a guide program award in fish and wildlife achievement this November. I spent five days at the New York State Fair doing demonstrations of fly tying and rod wrapping.



This last spring, I continued my passion for bird banding at Crown Point during the annual migration of songbirds northward after the winter. I have been helping to band birds there for ten years. This year, I am hoping to apply for an apprentice bander permit. I enjoy being able to observe the birds up close, which allows me to see adaptations in the birds that allow them to survive. I also enjoy learning from master bird banders at Crown Point. In my opinion, observing birds in their natural setting is absolutely awesome.

In school, my courses become more complex each year. During this school year I am enjoying progressing in math and science. In chemistry I enjoy learning how and why chemicals react certain ways with each other. Last year, I had the second highest overall average in my class. I am a member of the School Improvement Team at Warrensburg High School, and am also on the Yearbook staff and take care of a lot of the bookkeeping. This is my third year on the Junior Honor Society, and I also participate in peer tutoring where I help other kids who are having trouble with their studies.

I am very hopeful that I will be able to attend returnee week at Pack Forest this coming year for many reasons. I am hoping to be able to see some of the staff and campers who were there last year. In the future I would like to volunteer and later work at the Camp Pack Forest so that I would be able to pass my knowledge of the outdoors on to others. Thank you for considering me for a scholarship.

*By Woody Cyr, Warrensburg*

*Editor's note: Thank you to Ellen Rathbone, HPAS Education Chair, for all her work notifying schools in our four-county area of the contest.*

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## Spruce Grouse Alert!

Dr. Glenn Johnson and Angelena Ross are seeking information from birders about Spruce Grouse sightings in the Adirondack Mountain region of New York. If you have observed one of these birds in the last several years in New York, please consider providing Dr. Johnson with details of the time and specific location. He can be reached by email at johnsong@potdam.edu, by phone (315) 267-2710 and by regular mail, Department of Biology, 44 Pierrepont Ave, SUNY Potsdam, Potsdam, NY 13676. Thank you.



## Bio of a Naturalist – Ellen Rathbone

**Age:** 40 (!)

**Birthplace:** Naval base at Portsmouth, VA

**Residence:** Newcomb, NY

**Occupation:** Environmental Educator for the Adirondack Park Agency at the Visitor Interpretive Center in Newcomb.

**Started Birding:** “I must confess that I have never really been one of those people for whom the word “bird” is a verb. I’ve worked as a naturalist since I graduated from college in 1988, and being able to identify birds is part of the job. However, at most places where I worked (prior to moving to the Adirondacks), there were others on staff who were/are die-hard birders, so I was able to coast along with the rudimentary knowledge I had from watching the birds at my grandparents’ feeders when I was a child. It wasn’t until I started working at the VIC that I finally had to branch out and really start to learn my birds.”

**Inspiration:** “I have had a life-long love of the outdoors. From one set of grandparents I learned about birds, and from another grandmother I learned about wildflowers. My dad planted many, many trees on our less-than-one-acre yard, we grew all our own veggies, and we composted and recycled before it was “in.” In sixth grade I decided that I wanted to be a forester, and I more or less followed that line of thought right up until college, when I enrolled as a forestry major at SUNY ESF. However, once there I changed to their dual program, which was forestry with a concentration in biology. I was lucky to land an internship at a nature center right out of college, and discovered that being a naturalist is the way to go! In what other field of work do you actually get paid to spend time out in the woods, on rivers and lakes, in swamps and bogs...looking at and sharing with others the natural world? I had found my niche!”

**Bird Activities:** “Well...I feed the birds at home, and I did some falconry at the zoo where I worked. I help visitors identify birds at the feeders here at the VIC, and I go on the occasional bird walk led by HPAS. (I confess that plants are more my “thing.”)”

**Most exciting bird observation in the Adirondacks:** “Is Hinckley Reservoir in the Park? I don’t think so...but if it was, the answer would be the Yellow-billed Loon that was there about six years ago. Other than that...I had an Eastern Meadowlark in my yard a couple years ago. It had to go to a rehabber, and sadly did not survive, but still, it was alive when it was in my yard. Also a couple years ago, I watched a pair of Merlins throughout their nesting season. I got to see them go from sitting on the nest, to fledging their young and training their offspring to hunt on their own.”

## Mark Your Calendars! Upcoming HPAS Events

**Saturday, July 23, 2005**

**High Peaks Audubon Society’s Annual Mtg.  
Osgood River Canoe trip a.m.  
Noon picnic at the Paul Smiths VIC pavilion  
Presentation: Lydia Wright on “Butterflies of  
the Adirondacks” at 2 p.m.  
Paul Smiths VIC**

**Saturday, August 20, 2005 at 1 p.m.**

**Glenn Richard on “Bog Plants” followed by a  
guided walk to a bog.  
Paul Smiths VIC**

**Saturday, September 3, 2005**

**Tom Horton on “Mushroom Identification”  
followed by a guided walk to view mushrooms.  
Newcomb VIC**

**Saturday, October 1, 2005 at 11 a.m.**

**Michale Glennon on “Wildlife Conservation  
Society and the Boreal Bird Project”  
Paul Smiths VIC**

More details to follow in upcoming Newsletter issues!

## Become A Member of HPAS Just \$15 a year

Benefits include: quarterly newsletter, program meetings, field trips, Great Adirondack Birding Festival, CBCs and more...

Make Check Payable to High Peaks Audubon Society, Inc. and mail to:

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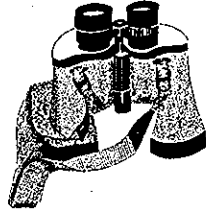
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## County Birding Challenge!

Enjoy a day of birding during spring migration, raise money for HPAS (help send a camper to DEC Camp again next summer) and win prizes!

Here's how:



*Binoculars by George West*

- Pick 1 day during the week of May 14 to 22 to see how many species you can count in your county in 24 hours. Get pledges (e.g. \$0.25 per species) from family and friends. Challenge your birder-friends!
- Or just call, write or email a pledge for a birder in your county or the county total.

The winning counties (total species and total pledge amount) will be announced at the June meeting and in the Newsletter. Clinton, Essex and Hamilton Counties have each won once for the total number of species. Where are the Franklin County birders? Which county will break the 3-way tie? Good luck!

**Contact:** Pat Thaxton, (518) 576-4232, [jpthax5317@aol.com](mailto:jpthax5317@aol.com) or PO Box 488, Keene Valley, NY 12943.

## News and Updates

- Brian McAllister led 24 friendly people on a bird walk at Bloomingdale Bog and Bigelow Road on February 5<sup>th</sup>. He reported sunny skies, Gray Jays, Boreal Chickadees, and White-winged Crossbills!
- Starting with this spring *High Peaks Audubon Newsletter* issue, we have switched to seasonal (quarterly) issues. (March-May, June-August, September-November, December-February)
- Margot Ernst, HPAS board member, was just elected to the National Audubon Board of Directors! Margot is also a member of the Audubon New York Board of Directors. She will bring a wonderful perspective to her board positions serving at the Chapter, State, and National levels.
- The *Birds of North America* is available online! For a yearly subscription of \$40, you gain access to all bird species accounts in North America, including video and sound. To subscribe, visit the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's web site at: [www.birds.cornell.edu](http://www.birds.cornell.edu).
- The *Handbook of Bird Biology* is now available from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. It serves as the textbook for the "Home Study Course in Bird Biology", but you can now purchase just the textbook by visiting the web site listed above.
- Channel 5 News from Plattsburgh spent two hours at the home of HPAS board members Pat and John Thaxton to produce a story on the Great Backyard Bird Count. The camera man lay on his back under the Thaxton's thistle feeder pointing his camera up at all the Pine Siskins!

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