

Volume 49, Issue IV

Northern New York Audubon

December 2021- February 2022 Newsletter



Dear friend of Northern NY Audubon,

As much as I love summer and birding in warmer weather, I'm excited for winter! Honestly, nothing makes me as happy as cross-country skiing through a quiet, snowy forest with the local Black-capped Chickadees and occasional winter finches.

Birds bring us so much joy, from the simple pleasure of watching feeders to finding a rare lifer. With the great diversity of bird life in Northern New York, we have a lot to be grateful for. But how can we give back to the birds? Here are few things you can do in your day to day life:

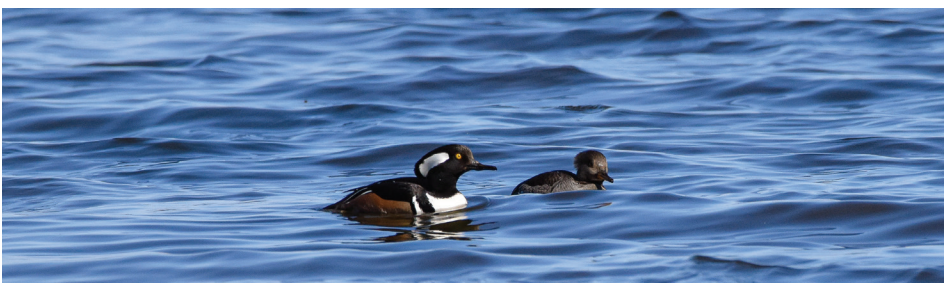
- Make windows safer by breaking up reflections to prevent collisions
- Plan a garden full of native plants for next spring
- Keep feeders clean to keep birds happy, safe, and healthy
- Drink shade-grown coffee
- Reduce the amount of plastic you use
- Observe birds and report what you see on eBird

And, of course, you can donate to Northern NY Audubon. As a fully volunteer organization, we rely on your generous support to achieve our mission: to promote the protection and proper management of birds, wildlife, and the fragile ecosystems throughout Northern New York. Of your membership dollars, 100% are reinvested back into the community in the form of supporting our local birds and their habitats, education, funding long-term research about local bird species, and helping us all enjoy the birds we love!

I am incredibly thankful for all the support we've received and see only positives on the horizon.

Wishing everyone a healthy, happy, and bird-filled holiday season,

Janelle Jones
President, Northern NY Audubon



Northern New York Audubon is dedicated to conserving and restoring natural ecosystems in the Adirondacks, focusing on habitat of particular importance to birds, other wildlife, humanity, and the Earth's biological diversity as a whole. As one of National Audubon's 27 local chapters in New York, NNYA's mission is "to promote the protection and proper management of birds, wildlife, and the fragile ecosystems throughout Northern New York."

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News

Raising a Glass to the Birds

Join Northern New York Audubon and Raquette River Brewing for the release of a brand new beer: the Spruce Tip IPA!

This will be a limited barrel batch, so you don't want to miss this event! Spruce Tip IPA celebrates the Spruce Grouse, an iconic bird species that is endangered in New York, but can be found in some boreal forests in the area. A portion of Spruce Tip IPA sales will be donated to Northern New York Audubon. In addition to Spruce Tip IPA, NNYA will be onsite with merchandise and raffle prizes for a donation. Join us and raise a glass to the Spruce Grouse!

Contact Information

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Northern New York Audubon

Executive board

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Whether you're near or far, stay connected with us virtually! Like us on Facebook (www.Facebook.com/NNYAudubon) to keep up-to-date on future events, outings, local bird news, and information from the greater birding community.

Details

- Where: Raquette River Brewing, 11 Balsam St #2, Tupper Lake, NY 12986
- When: December 11, 2021 from 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.
- Cost: Admission will be free. Food and drinks will be available for purchase.
- Beer Availability: Spruce Tip IPA will be sold exclusively at Raquette River Brewing by the pint, flight, or 4-pack of cans. Saturday will be the first day this beer is available, and it will be available only at the brewery until it's gone.

How to Support NNYA

- A portion of proceeds from all Spruce Tip IPA sales will be donated to NNYA
- Spruce Tip IPA t-shirts will be available for a donation of \$25 to NNYA
- NNYA hats will be available for a donation of \$20
- Raffle tickets will be sold throughout the event with great prizes drawn every hour!
- Become a member and get bonus raffle tickets



Calling All Volunteers!

Do you have a passion for birds and habitat conservation? Are you interested in newsletter design? We are looking for dedicated volunteers to help further our mission. If you are interested in helping elevate the NNYA message and contribute to our work, please email nnya@nnya.org and let us know.

Winter Birding Weekend in the Central Adirondacks!

Saturday & Sunday, January 29-30, 2022

Enjoy a weekend of birding trips in the Central Adirondacks this winter. Participants will look for winter irruptive species – Red and White-winged Crossbills have already irrupted - along with year-round boreal residents such as Ruffed Grouse, Black-backed Woodpecker, Canada Jay, and Boreal Chickadee. There is an abundance of food in the Adirondacks this year (both fruit and cone seeds), so it will be interesting to see what species show up!

Due to the COVID pandemic, we will forgo the usual Saturday presentation and social dinner this year. With such an exciting birding winter expected, we wanted to at least hold field trips, and participants can still socialize outdoors during the trips.

Field Trips: Joan Collins, NNYA, will lead field trips on both days. Both Saturday and Sunday morning, meet outside the Adirondack Hotel at 7 a.m. (near the bridge over Long Lake on Route 30). Participants can drive in their own vehicles, or car-pool, if they are comfortable.

Registration is required to attend the field trips. Call the Long Lake Parks and Recreation Department at 518-624-3077 to register. There is a maximum of 25 participants for each field trip.

The Winter Birding Weekend is sponsored by the Long Lake Parks and Recreation Department and cosponsored by Northern New York Audubon.



Red Crossbill by Joan Collins

Christmas Bird Counts

Each year, NNYA participates in Christmas Bird Counts (CBC), a citizen science project organized by the National Audubon Society. From December 14 through January 5, volunteers across the country help get a snap shot of the bird population. The first CBC was in 1900 and was the idea of ornithologist Frank Chapman. There were 25 counts done that first year. In recent years, the number of counts has been over 1,800. Six circles are in the Northern New York region and we encourage members and non-members alike to participate in the Christmas Bird Counts. No experience is necessary and it is a great way to get out and safely enjoy the outdoors during the holidays!

At the time of print, we were not able to confirm dates for all six circles. Please check our [website](#) for current info as it becomes available.



Elizabethtown

Date: Saturday, December 18, 2021

Contact: Betsy Miner or Mar Bodine at corgiforest@gmail.com or marbo59@verizon.net

Note from coordinators: No gathering is planned this year due to COVID.

Ferrisburg, Vermont

Date: Saturday, December 18, 2021

Contact: John and Pat Thaxton at jpthax5317@gmail.com

Note from coordinators: No gathering is planned this year due to COVID.

Massena-Cornwall

Date: Saturday, December 18, 2021

Contact: Eileen Wheeler at eiwheeler@yahoo.com

Note from coordinators: No gathering is planned this year due to COVID.

Plattsburgh

Date: Sunday, December 19, 2021

Contact: Michael Burgess at michael.b.burgess@plattsburgh.edu

Note from coordinator: The count is centered near the Plattsburgh International airport, and the circle includes a portion of the western shoreline of Grand Isle, VT, plus numerous exceptional birding hot spots.

Potsdam-Canton

Date: Tuesday, December 28, 2021

Contact: Jeff Bolsinger at jsbolsinger@yahoo.com

Note from coordinator: Given uncertainty about how COVID will be, there will not be any in-person gatherings.

Saranac Lake

Date: Sunday, January 2, 2022

Contact: Steven Langdon at sflangdon@gmail.com

Note from coordinator: The Saranac Lake CBC is centered in Ray Brook and includes the villages of Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Bloomingdale.

Winter Finch Forecast

The 2021-22 Winter Finch Forecast is out! For those who are new to Finch Forecasting, the Winter Finch Forecast is a prediction of what finch (and other) species may irrupt into Northern New York, New England, and some surrounding areas. (An irruption is when northern birds move to or through an area in unusually high numbers.)

This season's Finch Forecast was done by Tyler Hoar. Hoar notes that the Finch Forecast is a prediction and for up-to-date information about species observations, birders should follow reports on eBird. For the full Finch Forecast, visit <https://finchnetwork.org/winter-finch-forecast-2021-2022-by-tyler-hoar>. Here's how the 2021-2022 season looks:

“The year's flight should not be an irruption year, but some southward movement should be into their normal southern wintering areas in Southeastern Canada and Northeastern United States. However, there will be movement of most finches varying by species and location in the boreal forest. So you will be able to find most species, but it won't be like last year when they came to so many people's backyards, this year you'll very likely need to go search for them. Extreme weather this summer has played a significant part in this winter's forecast. With over 2000 forest fires stretching from Northwestern Ontario to British Columbia, record-setting high temperatures across much of western Canada, and severe droughts in wide areas westward from Lake Superior, food sources have been significantly impacted. This should be a good winter to see finches in traditional hotspots such as Ontario's Algonquin Park, Quebec's Laurentian Mountains, New York's Adirondack Mountains, Atlantic Canada and the northern New England states.”

Observations on the Evening Grosbeaks

By: Ada Babcock Langdon, Massena, NY (1950)

Photos by: Larry Master

Without a background in ornithology, I certainly make no attempt to give scientific data on the Evening Grosbeak, but I am in a position to make some critical observations about the ones who have claimed my residence.

My first contact with grosbeaks was four winters ago when a small flock of them chanced into a sumac tree in back of our house. The gay, brightly feathered callers were an interesting diversion during the February winds and little else happening to delight us. We were interested in watching them and even took the trouble to look in Petersons' GUIDE TO BIRDS for information about their eating habits. We read that they are “seed eaters, frequenting any area where food is plentiful.” They stripped the sumac, pecked about in the wild bird seed we offered, and then disappeared.

Very early the next January, I was delighted to discover a fairly large flock of the handsome golden little birds in the sumac. In the summer, we had raised sunflowers along the back fence, so I offered a handful of dried seeds. The grosbeaks fell on the seeds with such eagerness that I thought they were famished. My sympathy was roused, and I fed my colorful friends my entire crop. When it was exhausted, we purchased more seed for the impatient birds who set up a clamor every morning and evening. Such friendliness is warming and not to be denied.

Continued from previous page

The next winter they appeared right after New Year's Day, at least a hundred strong. We had planted sunflowers again, from which we had saved a bushel of seeds. I had saved, also, a generous supply of melon and squash seeds and had put in my regular commercial wild bird mixture. The ravenous birds stayed on, living on my bounty long after spring arrived. They demand such staggering quantities of food that I wanted to organize a Sunflower Seeds Anonymous! They set their alarms earlier and earlier each morning until, just before they left for their next comfort station, they were calling for breakfast before five o'clock in the morning.

This last winter we had an estimated three hundred of the pests dipping on our property.



My observations? These bold birds have no friendliness in their make-up. They care nothing for people, and they don't like each other. They like FOOD in quantities that make the infamous woodchuck seem delicately restrained, in comparison. Where the food comes from is of no consequence so long as the lazy beggars don't have to do more than pick it up.

I observed that they are rude, arrogant, and belligerent. The males fight among themselves like wolves, and they abuse their wives in the flock. The females are a haggling crew with the gentility of a group of camp followers. The entire flock seems to be made up of gorgeous feathers, bad dispositions, and insatiable appetites.

They are demanding and rowdy. If they are not fed when they first appear in the mornings, they fly into rages and hurl curses throughout the neighborhood. I have known them to hurl themselves at the house with such force as to break their necks.

They are grossly selfish. While they spurn the smaller seeds I offer the smaller birds, they maintain a dog-in-the-manger relationship with our more common callers. They delight in alighting on the hanging feeders provided for the chickadees and woodpeckers. They have successfully eliminated these birds from our yard although they spurn their feed. Even the swaggering grackles make way for these bullies. They have routed every cat and dog from the neighborhood and they set up a campaign to drive out the gray squirrels, although the nuts and peanuts provided for the squirrels don't interest them.

By actual tally they consumed sixty pounds of sunflower seeds, fifty pounds of scratch feed and twenty pounds of wild bird mixture for which I have paid bills. And I raised two bushels of sunflower seeds for them as well. Granted, the grosbeak is a handsome bird, but he is bankrupting me. Next year I shall claim an exemption for him on my income tax, or—better still—we might move secretly to a new address hoping that they don't track us down through the post office department!!



Black-throated Green Warbler
By: Larry Master



Ruffed Grouse
By: Larry Master

Birches and Birds!

By: Catherine Smith, NNYA Board Member

The forests of the Adirondack region support an incredible diversity of birds with different bird species using different levels within the forest. A healthy forest has a forest floor composed of herbaceous plants, a shrub layer, a subcanopy and a canopy. Our native birch species are an important part of the subcanopy with yellow birch sometimes attaining canopy status.

Take a walk in the woods and you will find paper birch, yellow birch, gray birch, sweet birch, and along river banks and wet areas in some parts of the Adirondacks, river birch. On that walk, you may see Ruffed Grouse eating birch tree seeds and buds, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers drilling holes in birch bark forming wells of sap to eat, and Pileated Woodpeckers excavating yellow birch in search of ants or to create a nesting cavity. If you are really lucky, you may see Ruby-throated Hummingbirds and Black-throated Green Warblers ripping off strips of birch bark to use as nesting material.

Birds need native plants to obtain nutritious food in the form of fruits, berries, nuts, and the caterpillars and many other kinds of insects that feed on native plants. I love finding caterpillars almost as much as birds do! My go-to caterpillar guide is "Caterpillars of Eastern North America" by David Wagner. The guide includes a food plant index; I quickly counted over 90 butterfly and moth larvae that eat birch. Paper birch, for example, is a host plant for the larvae of the Canadian tiger swallowtail, the lovely luna moth and the mourning cloak butterfly. Caterpillars are a protein rich food source for many bird species including the Black-throated Blue Warbler and the Chestnut-sided Warbler.

The next time you admire the iconic tree of the Adirondacks, remember that paper birch, as well as our other birch species, are a nutritious buffet for our forest creatures!



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