

WINGBEATS



Winter Birding



by Bob Budliger

December to a birder in the Northeast is the end of Fall and the beginning of Winter, and the calendar date of the change varies depending on the first heavy snows and/or temperature drops. Compilers often schedule their Christmas Bird Counts for early in the period to tally late migrants and half-hardy songbirds. Some schedule their counts into January to be assured of adding the irruptive northern visitors. Temperature, snow cover, and ice conditions on lakes and rivers are variable in December, but winter has certainly set in by the first of the new year. The corps of birders substantially diminishes with the appearance of winter.

There are several good birding opportunities for the cold season. Obviously, bird feeding is high on the list. A backyard with several kinds of feeders offering a diversity of foods may attract 20 or more species of birds. Tube feeders with sunflower seeds, platform feeders with seed mixes, and wire cages or onion bags stuffed with suet offer a variety of foods that will attract chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, woodpeckers, goldfinches, juncoes, and sparrows. Northern Cardinals are fond of safflower seed and will take it from a platform, even the ground. A lot of sparrows will feed on the ground on seeds spilled from above by other birds. If there is an incursion of siskins and redpolls, hang a niger seed feeder--a tube feeder with tiny slits or a fine mesh bag; gold-

finches love this as well. Try raisins, orange and apple slices, and peanut butter for Carolina Wrens. There are a lot of books in the library on bird feeding--look for those by Steve Kress. A really good start is to visit the Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar where there is a model backyard feeding station. Staff will begin their 2004 bird list with a public bird walk at 9:00 a.m. on Jan 1 New Year's Day.

Wanting more than backyard birds, many area birders visit places like Five Rivers where there are passable trails into woods and fields where they can see birds that don't often come to feeders--Eastern Bluebird, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Cedar Waxwing. More hardy folks may hike, snowshoe, or ski in the area's many state parks, state forests, and wildlife management areas.

The Hudson and Mohawk Rivers offer good opportunities to see a variety of waterfowl and gulls, and even a Bald Eagle or two. Very good car access to the Hudson makes the search for eagles comfortable. Scanning the trees across from the waterfront parks at Coxsackie and Coeymans frequently turns up an eagle, and those patient birders who sit in their cars and watch for awhile usually are rewarded with a fly-by view of one. Other good eagle sites are Cohoes, Crescent, and Stillwater.

Canada Goose, Mallard, Black Duck, Common Goldeneye, and Common Merganser are the commonest waterfowl, but many other species may be found. Gulls present an identification challenge with Ring-billed, Herring, and Great Black-backed being the common three against which all others may be compared. The unusual wintering gulls are Iceland, Glaucous, and Lesser Black-backed and there are even reports of Thayer's, a really difficult and controversial challenge. The best site for these birds is at the power station on the Cohoes-Crescent Road, which is also good for eagles.

Don't hibernate. Get out into the winter wonderland and enjoy some of the 100 or so species of birds you may find in the Capital Region this winter.

In This Issue...

2004 Programs & Field Trips 2

Pesticides and Healthy Backyard Habitats 3

Catskill Resort Proposal 3

Colonie Plans for Mohawk River 4

Audubon Society of the Capital Region



**Cordially Invites You To Attend Our
Year 2004 Programs & Field Trips**



Audubon Programs

All Programs to be held at:

**William K. Sanford
Colonie Town Library**

Thursday, January 8, 2004, 7:00-9:00 pm

Owls

Speakers: Bill Gorman

Location: Colonie Town Library

Almost every five year old can recognize an owl, yet most adults have never seen an owl in the wild. There are eleven species of owls found in upstate New York and several are permanent residents. Finding these owls in the wild is not easy, but viewing them on the screen is. Please join Bill for his movies showing all of the owls found in the eastern United States.

Thursday, February 12, 2004, 7:00-9:00 pm

At Home With Pesticides

Speaker : Sean Mahar

Location: Colonie Town Library

See Page 3 for details on this exciting program. Sean Mahar, a graduate of Siena College, Loudonville, New York, holds a major in Environmental Studies, and minor in Biology. Presently, Sean works at Audubon New York, the New York State program of the National Audubon Society, as a legislative assistant, and the grassroots advocacy coordinator. He has also been very active in advancing Audubon's pesticide education campaign, which seeks to educate homeowners on the negative environmental and human health effects of the aesthetic use of lawn care pesticides.

Hudson-Mohawk Bird Programs

Monday, January 5, 2004, 7:00 p.m.

A Natural Delmarva

Speaker : Tom Lindsey

Location: Colonie Town Library

Monday, February 2, 2004, 7:00 p.m.

100 Years of Birdbanding -

53 on my watch

Speaker: Bob Yunick

Location: Colonie Town Library

Scientific bird banding in North America celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2002. Administered by the US Geological Service's biological resources division, over 60 million birds have been banded by professional and vocational banders in the U. S. and Canada.

In his presentation, Bob Yunick, who banded his first bird in Schenectady in 1950, the same year he joined the Schenectady Bird Club (predecessor to HMBC), will describe some of the history of banding as well as the techniques used, and his experiences in banding over 176,000 birds of 203 species in six U. S. states and the Canadian arctic. It will cover from hummers to hawks, showing some of the capture devices, and the kinds of bands used for different species.

Some of the stories about the finding of banded birds in distant places seem almost stranger than fiction, but all provide data on better understanding the marvel of migration and the challenges birds confront in order to survive.

Audubon Field Trips

No Field Trips Scheduled For Early 2004

Refreshments will be served. As always, we encourage you to bring your friends and family. For directions or details, call Greg Rucinski at the Colonie Library at (518) 458-9274.

Pesticides and Healthy Backyard Habitats

By Sean Mahar

Can you believe that 3 times more pesticides are applied per acre on household lawns and gardens than are applied to agricultural crops? With this current trend, it is not surprising that these toxic chemicals have killed an estimated 7 million birds annually across the country. Not only is it affecting birds, but it is also having an impact on water quality and possibly human health.

As part of Audubon New York's Pesticide education campaign, which was initiated in response to this type of data, two hundred thousand households across New York State were provided with science-based flyers and brochures discussing the negative environmental and human health effects of using toxic lawn care chemicals this past year. The goal of this campaign is to bring homeowners peer-reviewed scientific information on the negative impacts lawn care pesticide will have on lawns, and provide information on alternative products and techniques that can be used to maintain a healthy lawn without relying on pesticides and other chemical methods.

It is our hope that with this information homeowners will begin to see that their lawns are actually habitats that can, and should support a wide variety of birds, plants and animals. A healthy backyard habitat consists of a diverse range of native plant and grass species, which naturally require less maintenance and care. These native plants also attract more birds, and beneficial insects that can also lead to a healthier lawn, and can help balance any pest problems that may occur. However, pesticides, herbicides, and other lawn chemicals, don't create a healthy backyard habitat for birds, wildlife, plants and people. They can drive away many of the same bird and insect species that help to keep your lawn healthy, and cause the need for increased time and money to take care of your lawn. But current misleading advertising creates a necessity for these toxic chemicals to be used.

This spring, we are again encouraging homeowners to make informed decisions about the products they purchase on their lawns, and to reduce their use of pesticides. We will again be distributing more of the same science based flyers and brochures to homeowners, and strongly encourage Audubon members and other citizens to help us with this outreach. Please contact our offices if you are interested in obtaining copies of this information. Remember to spread the word about pesticides instead of spreading pesticides.

DEC Issues Draft on Major Catskill Resort Proposal

By Graham Cox

A draft environmental impact statement for a major resort, recreation and housing complex next to the Belleayre Ski Center in the Catskill Park has been released by the State DEC and hearing dates set on the draft and on the permits required for water supply and sewage discharge.

The project is called the Belleayre Resort at Catskill Park, proposed by Crossroad Ventures. The project includes 400 hotel rooms, 351 additional hotel and housing units, a 21-lot single family residential subdivision and two 18-hole golf courses.

The project, according to DEC, would be developed within 1,960 acres straddling the Ulster and Delaware county line, with a total of 573 acres disturbed and the rest left undisturbed. Part of the project is in the town of Shandaken, and part is in Middletown, adjacent to Fleischmanns. The project is in two distinct parts, on either side of the state-owned and operated ski center, both along the Route 28 highway corridor.

One part is on 1,242 acres, the Big Indian Plateau east of the ski center. It is within the New York City Ashokan Reservoir watershed. Effluent would be discharged to Birch Creek and also onto one of the ridge-top golf courses for irrigation. The other part of the project would be on 718 acres west of the ski center; this is within the New York City Pepacton Reservoir watershed and would discharge effluent to an unnamed tributary and also onto the second golf course for irrigation purposes.

The details and the hearing dates are as follows:

The full document -- application materials, SPDES fact sheets, draft SPDES permit, draft EIS and other information -- is available for review at the State DEC headquarters at 625 Broadway, Albany, in the hearings office, as well as in the DEC regional office in New Paltz. The draft SPDES permits and fact sheets are on the DEC website, www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dcs/seqr/FEIS/index.html

Key dates for public input are: Public hearings in Margaretville Central School Jan. 14 and Onteora Central School Jan. 15, both starting at 4 p.m. An alternate hearing date is set for Jan. 20. To be a party to the hearings conference, you must file by Feb. 17. Public comments must be filed by Feb. 24, and an issues conference will be convened on March 9. The key DEC contact person, for questions and comments, is Alex Ciesluk, Jr., deputy regional permit administrator, in the New Paltz office, at afcieslu@gw.dec.state.ny.us Audubon New York and the State Audubon Council have been involved with other concerned conservation and community groups for the last two years in reviewing draft materials and likely community and environmental impacts. This review will continue, implementing an Audubon New York and Council resolution passed in 2002 and re-confirmed in 2003.

Election and Nominating

The annual election of Officers and Board Members of the Audubon Society of the Capital Region will be conducted at the beginning of the February 12, 2004 meeting at the William K. Sanford Library, Colonie. The Nominating Committee has almost completed its work and will present the official slate at the February meeting. Nominations will also be taken from the floor.

OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

President: Robert Budliger
36 Groesbeck Place
Delmar, NY 12054
(518) 439-0006 (home)
rbudliger@aol.com

Vice: Craig Thompson
President: 508B Stanton Road
Coeymans Hollow, NY 12046
(518) 756-3610 (home)
cdthoms@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Secretary: David Gibson
107 Longkill Road
Ballston Lake, NY 12019
(518) 877-8678 (home)
(518) 377-1452 (work)

Treasurer: Louise Desormeau
P.O. Box 487
Latham, NY 12110
(518) 433-0227 (home)
auntlouisd@aol.com

DIRECTORS

Sue Adair 107 Fox Run Drive Schenectady, NY 12303 (518) 355-8008 (home) adair@nycap.rr.com	René-Yves Facchetti 1392 Delaware Turnpike Delmar, NY 12054 (518) 768-4630 (home) rfacchet@albany.net
Graham Cox 18A Michael Terrace Albany, NY 12203 (518) 456-1489 (home) gc Cox@audubon.org	Frank Murphy 407 Astor Court Delmar, NY 12054 (518) 577-8005 thrush@nycap.rr.com
Scott Stoner 6 Knob Hill Road Loudonville, NY 12211 (518) 785-6760 (home)	Erin Willsey 182 Stage Road Box 290B East Berne, NY 12059

COMMITTEES

Conservation: David Gibson
(518) 877-8678 (home)

Education: Available

Programs: Scott Stoner
(518) 785-6760 (home)

Field Trips: Robert Budliger
(518) 439-0006 (home)

Membership: Louise Desormeau
(518) 433-0227 (home)

Publicity: Sam Katz
(518) 372-8412 (home)

**Editor of Wingbeats /
Webmaster:** René-Yves Facchetti
(518) 768-4630 (home)
rfacchet@albany.net

Colonie Starts On New Plan For The Mohawk Riverfront

An international team of planners and conservation specialists has completed a set of suggestions for the future of the 10-mile stretch of the Mohawk River through the town of Colonie. The planners were brought together by the Glynwood Center's Countryside Exchange program and they worked for an intensive week with a broad-based local organizing committee in September.

Their report is now available for review on the town web site, www.colonie.org/mohawk. The report identifies key open space targets for future acquisition or management programs, suggests ways the town can boost the recreation and tourism potential of the river front, suggests better ways to use the many publicly-owned facilities and parcels along the river, and suggests ways the river front can be tied to other recreation and development opportunities in the town as a whole.

For information about the work of the Glynwood Center, which strives to help communities shape their own futures and has worked with more than 100 communities in the US, Canada, Japan and Europe since 1987, visit their web site at www.glynwood.org

***** For Programs, Field Trip, & Further General
Environmental Information, Visit Us on the Internet at:
www.CapitalRegionAudubon.Org**



**AUDUBON SOCIETY
OF THE CAPITAL REGION, INC.
P.O. Box 487
Latham, NY 12110**

Return Service Requested

Printed on Recycled Paper 

PRSR STD
US Postage
Paid
Albany, NY
Permit # 881

**DATED PROGRAM
PLEASE EXPEDITE**