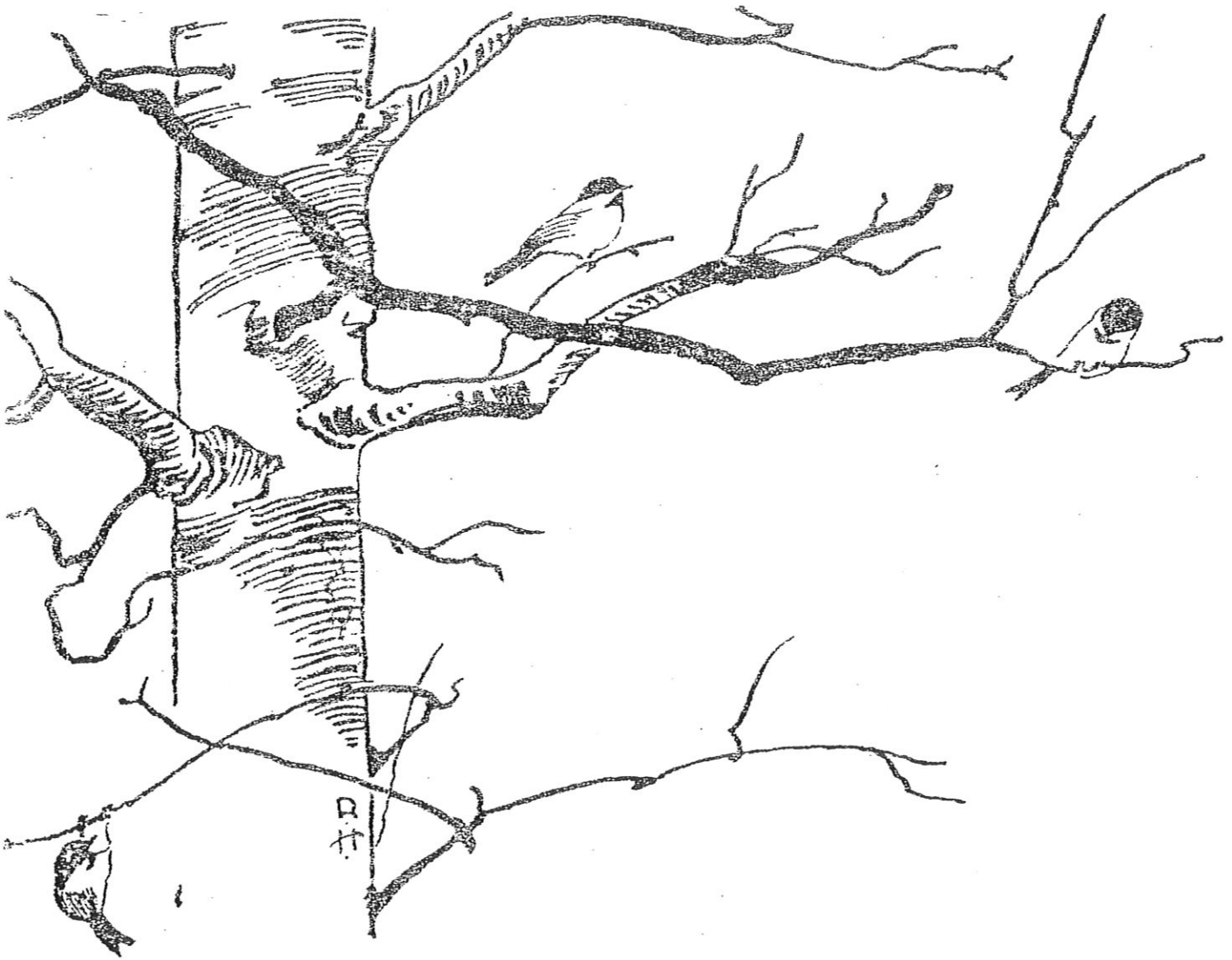


THE ORANGE FEATHER



Orange County, New York

2016 – Fall/Winter

August, 2016

THE ORANGE FEATHER

A publication of
EDGAR A. MEARN'S BIRD CLUB
Orange County, New York

2014 OFFICERS

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Vice-President – Karen Miller, 346-0595
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Treasurer – Linda Strohl, 496-3021

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hi All,

I hope that summer finds you and your loved ones well. It's hard to believe that it is mid-summer already and shorebirds are beginning to make their way back through, from their breeding grounds to the north. It seems like only yesterday, that we were sifting through flocks of geese, looking for rarities. The month of August typically yields the greatest numbers of shorebirds in our area. Tom Davis (At one time, the King of Jamaica Bay) once stated that the greatest number of species are found in July, but the highest numbers are found in August. Armed with that information, we should all be paying attention to the mudflats in our respective areas. The next rarity in our county, could be found by YOU.

We began the summer with our annual club picnic, held in June, at Winding Hills Park. . Tracy Patsch once again planned a very successful event, full of great food and conversation. Thank you Tracy, Linda Strohl, Joe Cullen and all who helped to make this year's picnic a success. If you have not taken part in this day in the past, make a point of it next year. It is truly a wonderful day.

Bruce "Night Heron" Nott (who will hate this recognition) is again finding Night Herons at an amazing rate. I do believe, that at this point, Bruce has found more Night Herons (Black crowned and Yellow crowned) in Orange County, than the rest of us combined. Good job Bruce!! You are the Night Heron Whisperer!

Thanks to Ralph Tabor, this summer at the Shawangunk Grasslands, should be known as the "Year of the Kestrel". Ralph reports that 21 Kestrel (adults and juvenile) were banded this year at the refuge. That's an amazing number! Thank you for your efforts Ralph. In addition to the birds themselves, we have all benefitted from you.

As summer progresses and eventually gives way to fall, the Yellow Warblers will suddenly disappear without any fanfare or warning. We will just realize one day that we have not seen any in a while. Before we know it, there will be Blackpolls with Bay legs and Bay-breasteds with black legs and all the Bobolink will look like females, until there are none. Soon after, we'll then sift through hundreds if not thousands of sparrows looking for that one that's a little different. We will then look at ducks and geese again and anticipate the colors of spring. Fortunately, this cycle has new and exciting possibilities unique to each season. That is one of the great things about this interest in birds. There are always things to see, things to look forward to and things to dream of.

Wishing you all a bird and joy filled remainder to your 2016.

Good Birding,

Curt McDermott

CLUB MEETINGS

When: Meetings are held every 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 PM (except as noted)

Where: During September-December meetings are held at Kenridge Farm, Cornwall, NY (in the farm house across from the barn. Kenridge Farm is part of the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum, 120 Muser Drive, Cornwall, NY 12518.

During January-May meetings are held at Washingtonville Middle School (in the library on the 2nd floor), 38 West Main Street, Washingtonville, NY 10992.

Programs:

9/12/16: Birding Taiwan – Bill Fiero

10/10/16: Birding Bhutan – Carol Weiss

11/14/16: Birding Brazil – Lee Hunter

12/12/16: Mearns Share-a-thon

1/09/17: TBA 2/13/17: usually no meeting 3/13/17: TBA

Alan Wells

FIELD TRIPS PAST

Hudson River Ramble – February 20 – Gerhard Patsch, Leader – A sunny, spring-like day greeted 22 members and friends for our ramble. Temperatures ranged from 40 to 60 degrees and some folks, not any in our group, were sporting shorts and showing off their knees. Our first stop was the Newburgh waterfront. There wasn't much ice on the Hudson River, at least not along the western shoreline. Mallards, Rock Pigeons and European Starlings are ever present at the waterfront, thanks to frequent public feedings of bread and rolls. Further out in the river we scoped Common Mergansers, Ruddy Ducks and American Wigeon. Our caravan of cars headed east across the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge and proceeded to the Beacon waterfront which put the bright sun at our backs. There was a bit more ice on the Beacon side of the river but even with the help of our club's gull maven, Curt McDermott, we found only our usual local winter gulls. It was getting warmer by the minute and Newburgh looked great from Beacon. We had our first Bald Eagle fly over in perfect light. At our next stop, the Dia Museum parking lot we found a huge flock of about 200 American Robins feeding on the fruit of trees whose name I don't know, probably crabapples. Check with Barry, Carol, Joe, Bob, et al. Our next stop was Madame Brett Park along the Fishkill Creek. Here several more Bald Eagles and a Cooper's Hawk provided some excitement while we explored the wetlands near the confluence of Fishkill Creek and the Hudson River finding Ring-necked Ducks and a Brown Creeper. Heading south to Breakneck Mountain, we sighted more Bald Eagles directly overhead and searched for a Golden Eagle who sometimes visits this part of the Hudson Highlands. We did not find a Golden but sharp-eyed Joe Cullen did spot a Peregrine soaring over Storm King Mountain and several American Ravens were seen and heard flying over Breakneck. Further down river at the Route 202 scenic overlook across from Bear Mountain and Iona Island we enjoyed a spectacular aerial display of several Bald Eagles and two more Peregrines, spied by our expert hawkers, Liza and Ajit Antony. It was fun to show these fantastic sightings to several interested and appreciative spectators who happened to be there too. With several more stops along the Hudson, our ramble continued to the Croton River, which thanks to a very close, thrilling Merlin fly-by, gave us a count of six raptor species for the day. Other highlights included Great Cormorants, Carolina Wren, Cedar Waxwings, Red-winged Blackbirds and a Gray Catbird. After a beautiful day of birding we tallied 50 species, including 40 Bald Eagles.

Black dirt – March 5 – Joe Cullen, Leader – 21 members and friends met at the Jolly Onion to bird the "Black Dirt" area. It was a partly cloudy and cool morning. The high for today was in the lowers 40's. We took basically the usual route through grasslands and sod farms looking for whatever birds that could be seen, and hopefully find some early migrants. Land birds were scarce. Some people saw a few White-crowned Sparrows on Skinners Lane, but otherwise it was quiet. On the old Warren Sod Farm we found a flock of Horned Larks, perhaps as many as 75-100. Some of us noticed a few Snow Buntings among them as they flew off. On Breeze Hill Road we found a flock of Canada Geese with about 6 Snow Geese among them. We also saw a good number of Killdeer in the horse pastures. We finished the trip about noon at the observation platform on Oil City Road where we saw good numbers of waterfowl, including:

Northern Pintails, a Northern Shoveler and Green-winged Teal, among others. We ended the trip with 41 species.

Bashakill – March 12 – Scott Baldinger – 27 members were on hand for the club's first Bashakill field trip of 2016. This time of year we are on the lookout for waterfowl and we had a pretty decent assortment which included: American Black Duck, Mallard, Wood Duck, American Wigeon and Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe and Mute Swan. Up in the air we had a good mix of raptors with Bald Eagles (adult and immature), Sharp-shinned Hawk, Northern Harrier, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks seen. Always, this time of the year at the Bashakill is a good time to be on the lookout for RUSTY BLACKBIRDS. We were rewarded with great looks at a flock of 30 foraging along the Stop Sign Trail this morning. Other good pickups on today's trip were Tree Swallows (started arriving at the Bashakill yesterday), Turkey Vulture, Common Raven, Killdeer, Fish Crow, Brown Creeper, Hermit Thrush, Fox Sparrow and Field Sparrow. We finished with 47 species. After our walk, 16 of us headed over to Danny's for a good lunch and conversation.

Rye – March 19 – Jodi Brodsky, Leader – no report submitted

Oil City Road – March 26 – Kathy Ashman, Leader – Twenty members of the Mearns Club gathered at the platform at 8:30. Before walking we surveyed the water in front of the platform. Sighted were American Coots, Pied-billed Grebes, Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal, Canada Geese and Mallards. Flying Northern Harriers put up large flocks of Green-winged Teal and Northern Pintail as they cruised the marsh. Due to the chilly temperatures and wind we decided to proceed down the west side of the loop first. In among the reeds were large numbers of Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail as well as American Coots. A few Killdeer were heard and seen. In the south pond we found a large number of Ring-necked Ducks, some American Wigeon, American Black Duck and more Green-winged Teal. We completed walking the loop by 10:30. The group decided to go to the Warren Sod Farm in hopes of relocating the Lapland Longspurs seen earlier in the week. We saw large numbers of Horned Larks and a few Savannah and Song Sparrows. Carol Weiss did manage to spot a longspur among the hundreds of Horned Larks, but the rest of the group was not so fortunate. From the Sod Farm we proceeded to lunch at the Harvest Inn. It was a wonderful outing on a beautiful spring morning. Temperature: 35 to 42 degrees, winds 5-15 mph out of the north, skies clear with scattered clouds. Total number of species was 42.

Eastern Orange lakes – April 2 – Linda Strohl, Leader – With this morning's weather so unpleasant, I was very surprised to see the good turnout for today's field trip. Thank you, hearty club members! Twelve of us started at the Walmart pond where Gadwall, Wood Ducks, Northern Shoveler, Ring-necked Ducks, Common Mergansers and Tree Swallows were seen. It was onto Orange Lake for more Wood Ducks, Ruddy Ducks and Lesser Scaup. Brown's Pond provided more Common Mergansers, Mute Swan, Bufflehead and a calling Eastern Phoebe. Beaver Dam Lake had 2 Ruddy Ducks in beautiful breeding plumage, Pied-billed Grebe, Eastern Bluebird, Carolina Wren and many of the previously mentioned waterfowl. Our last stop was on Kings Road to safely scope the pond along

Route 207. As we scanned the water American Coot, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, American Wigeon and Hooded Mergansers were seen and added to our list. We ended the trip with 53 species on this chilly, rainy day.

Shawangunk Grasslands – April 2 – Tom and Jane, Leaders – Twelve of us gathered at Popp's Park in Wallkill at 5:00 PM. It so far had been a windy, raw and rainy day. To our surprise, the wind began to calm down, the sun showed itself, and the temperature became mild by the time we arrived. At the park, Karen and Kevin pointed out an eagle's nest, in a conifer across the Wallkill River. We were pleased to see an eagle sitting on it. Common Mergansers were spotted in the river from Lippincott Road and flocks of blackbirds were active at Blue Chip Farm. Two more members joined us at the inner parking lot on the Grasslands. In this relaxing evening weather, with spring peepers singing away, we had our pick of what birds to look at. Ralph let us know 2 Short-eared Owls and Northern Harriers were flying low over the distant fields. More than one Eastern Meadowlark was singing and if we looked toward the ramp, there was both a Red-winged Blackbird and a singing meadowlark sitting side by side on the railing. Also in this direction was a Short-eared Owl perched in a small tree. Liz set up her spotting scope and encouraged us all to take a look. If we looked toward the tree line in the direction of the entrance we could watch the two active American Kestrels near a kestrel nest box, sometimes flying or hovering in this general area. Claudia brought some delicious juice so we could celebrate the new Mearns Club sign for the bench, just installed by Ralph and Claudia, on a stand that Ralph built. After that we walked toward the entrance to look for the woodcocks. Just a few astute people heard one or two in the distance. Surprisingly, none were actually seen or heard close by even though we waited until it was dark enough to see Jupiter as Tom pointed out, and Gerhard found us the International Space Station moving by!

Bashakill – April 16 – Joyce Depew, Leader – A simply gorgeous day to enjoy the outside! This trip was scheduled for the Bashakill, but due to some activities planned by other organizations it had the potential for overcrowding. On Scott's recommendation, I changed the location to Stewart State Forest (Weed Road access). Thanks, Scott, Bruce and Bob for the assistance in the change. There were about 24 participants. There were a collection of birders that had never explored the forest before and they were eager to go to a new area. Stewart State Forest has an abundance of varied habitats: hardwood forest, swamps, ponds and fields. I have hiked and done cross country skiing there and have observed birds during my activities. So I was eager to try this area which is rarely used on a club outing. We took the trail on the right that was about 50 yards into Weed Road which is wooded for a time and opens out into some fields. To my surprise we had many FIELD SPARROWS that were busily calling. This was the largest presence of Field Sparrows that I have ever seen. Generally I see more Song Sparrows in fields. After about 1.2 miles the birders were given the option of continuing toward the Maple Lane, Ridge Road areas or they could go back. 12 of us continued covering quite a large area and completed a bit over 6 miles! It definitely paid off and we had some great birds. After this trek we also visited a wetland that was created by beavers along Route 207 heading toward Newburgh and through permission granted to Bruce, we were able to set up scopes on the side of the road to view a fantastic area for waterfowl. We ended with

late lunch at the Neptune Diner and logged in a Fish Crow. We had 56 species. Here are some highlights: Stewart: American Black Duck, Virginia Rail (H), Swamp Sparrow, Wild Turkey, Broad-winged Hawk, Pileated Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Common Raven, Eastern Bluebird and Hermit Thrush; Wetland: Bufflehead, Double-crested Cormorant, Common Loon and Hooded Mergansers.

6 ½ Station Road – April 23 – Karen Miller, Leader – Under overcast skies 17 birders walked both sides of the Heritage Trail this morning and identified 53 species of birds, even though it often seemed short on birds. Some of our key finds were a Lesser Yellowlegs (in the Citgo Pond), an American Kestrel, a Winter Wren, a Common Raven, Yellow and Palm Warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Brown Thrasher, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher and three swallow species (Tree, Northern Rough-winged and Barn). Also heard was a Common Yellowthroat, Northern Waterthrush and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. An Osprey put on a good show diving for a meal. Swamp Sparrows were numerous and singing loudly. Missing were the Northern Mockingbird, Green Heron and the Barred Owl. It was an enjoyable morning of birding.

Kenridge Farm – April 27 – Bob Slechta, Leader – While the day started cool (47 degrees) and cloudy (it's been cooler lately than it was all of March and most of April) I knew it would be a good day...and it was! The eleven members for today's trip did a nice job locating 63 species and some darn good ones too! We hadn't gone too far when we spotted a handsome Chestnut colored Orchard Oriole and Joe Cullen quipped "you know...that's probably the bird of the day"...wrong. Not too much later and Barry Babcock comes over to me and says "we have a White-eyed Vireo". Joe chimed in soon after, "now that's the bird of the day!" The bird was singing but not visible. Thankfully on our return pass everyone got to see the bird even though it wasn't singing at that point. Many of the birds today were making their first appearance to our region like the flyover Chimney Swift and Eastern Kingbird, plus Gray Catbird, Warbling Vireo, Baltimore Oriole, House Wren, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, and Spotted Sandpiper. Also a treat today was a Merlin that made a pass at some American Goldfinches, several Blue-headed Vireos, a nice Nashville Warbler, many Yellow-rumps and Yellow Warblers, a few Palm Warblers plus Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Eastern Bluebirds, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, Eastern Phoebes and Common Ravens. We also did very well with sparrows today with many White-throats, several Song and Chipping Sparrows, a Field Sparrow plus one very nice Savannah and one Swamp. Hawks were also making a good showing with Osprey, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's Broad-winged and Red-tailed to round out a very productive morning of birding.

Chadwick Lake – April 30 – Bruce Nott, Leader – We started with 18 birders. Ten birders completed the 4.5 miles walk in temperatures ranging from 42 to 59 degrees. It was partly cloudy with a light wind. Highlights of the trip included large numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers and many Warbling Vireos.

Storm King Art Center – May 1 – Bob Slechta, Leader – I don't understand why everyone didn't show up today for a nice walk around Storm King Art Center. Perhaps it was the cool temperature (47 degrees) and light rain? However, two brave souls from the

Bronx (city dwellers must be hardier than us country folk) met me, and we did an abbreviated walk ending with 31 species. Most notable were good numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers, Chipping Sparrows, American Goldfinch, and American Robins. Other mentionable birds today were: Yellow, Warbler, Warbling Vireo, Eastern Bluebird, Wood Thrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Wild Turkey, Baltimore Oriole, Wood Duck, Tree Swallow and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. I actually wasn't too bad for birding weather-wise but there was a definite paucity of bird song today.

Doodletown – May 4 – Bob Slechta, Leader – It was yet another cool, overcast, rainy day for a scheduled bird trip. Even so, 5 Mearnsers showed up and we decided to drive out to Iona and bird around before deciding on what to do as the rain was light and didn't really hamper us too much. At Iona we had some nice stuff like Orchard Oriole, Spotted Sandpiper, Killdeer, Eastern Phoebe, Blue-gray-Gnatcatchers, Yellow Warbler, Tree, Barn and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, White-throated Sparrow and heard but not seen a Virginia Rail, Marsh Wren and Swamp Sparrow. By 9:15 it had pretty much stopped raining so we decided to head up into Doodletown, at least to the reservoir. We took our time and did get to see American Redstart, Cerulean and Blue-winged Warblers, Indigo Bunting, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Solitary Sandpiper, Belted Kingfishers "doing it", Great Blue Herons and a very close and cooperative Worm eating Warbler. Birds of note that we heard and didn't see were Louisiana Waterthrush, Hooded and Black-throated Green Warblers. We ended our morning at 11:00 with 50 species, not bad for a gloomy day.

Bashakill – May 7 – Gerhard Patsch, Leader – this spring we decided to start our field trip at the nature trail section of the Bashakill, because last year we were shut out of the area due to the lack of available parking. This year we were the first cars in the parking area. Our strategy paid off. Cloudy skies with intermittent rain on top of recent rainfalls made the nature trail wet and very soggy and slippery. But the birds didn't mind. They were active and singing. Immediately we enjoyed seeing several Yellow Warblers and American Redstarts and a Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Eastern Kingbirds, Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos and Solitary Sandpiper were also observed in the immediate area. Before day's end and after stops at the causeway, the Stop Sign Trail and the north boat launch, we would tally 18 species of wood warblers including: both waterthrushes, Prairie, Magnolia, Chestnut-sided, Canada, Worm-eating, Blue-winged, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Black and White, several Ceruleans and a gorgeous Blackburnian found by Kathy Ashman. Other notable sightings included Barry's 3 Red-throated Loons, Curt's Virginia Rail, Tracy's American Bittern, a singing Winter Wren, Field Sparrow, and thanks to John Haas a Wilson's Snipe, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers, and adding color to the mix we also enjoyed perennial favorites, Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Baltimore Orioles. Adding the usual suspects, our group of 12 members and friends, including Ernie Welch, tallied 85 species! Good birding indeed.

Goosepond – May 11 – Bill Iannone, Leader – This may have been the best weather we have ever had for a Goosepond trip. Slightly cool for the early morning but warming up into a beautiful sunshine filled day. We met at a new location this year, at the boardwalk

part of Goosepond Park on 17M between Chester and Monroe. What an excellent move. Four members and one guest got over 30 species by 8:00 AM. There was good bird activity at his small section of the park. Overhead we had Wood Ducks, Belted Kingfisher and Mallards while the field yielded Tree Swallows, Eastern Bluebirds and Red-winged Blackbirds. The boardwalk area and woods had Eastern Phoebe and Yellow-rumped Warblers targeting insects as Mourning Doves gathered up the pebbles and Song, Field and White-throated Sparrows along with Carolina Wren and Wood Thrushes let us hear their songs. In the trees we saw Baltimore, Oriole, American Goldfinch and Indigo Bunting. We then moved on to the Laroe Road entrance to Goosepond and collected over 30 species at the main part of the park, although bird activity was not as high as at the boardwalk. Here we had the steady customers of Eastern Towhees, Gray Catbirds, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Wild Turkey. Warblers included Yellow, Nashville, Prairie, American Redstart, Wilson's, Common Yellowthroat and Ovenbird. Then we added on a brief extension to our bird trip by going to a wetlands area behind an auction house in Sugarloaf. There we had Solitary Sandpiper. However it was not a solitary Solitary Sandpiper but about 20 Solitary Sandpipers who apparently, are not always solitary, but chased each other and posed for a great view. We also added Great Blue Heron, Green Heron, Greater Yellowlegs, Mute Swan, Common Raven, Northern Rough-winged and Chimney Swift. We had a grand total of 77 species which was a high for the Goosepond trip for the last 6 years, at least. The meeting place at the boardwalk and the addition of the Sugarloaf stop made the difference.

Break 100 – May 13 & 14 – see separate article

Doodletown – May 21 – Joe Trapani, Leader – Fifteen birders met on 9W near Iona Island for the hike up to Doodletown. The day was a bit cool and overcast but still a nice day for birding. Linda Strohl brought her grandson and he was the youngest hiker I can ever remember on a trip. At the start we found a Louisiana Waterthrush at the waterfall just off the road. It's May so everyone was on the lookout for warblers, especially the Kentucky Warbler. We heard it but I think Ajit was the only one who saw it. Dave Baker went back later and got a photo of the bird. In all we got 15 warbler species. Both Black and Yellow-billed Cuckoos made the list. There were lots of Red-eyed Vireos. In all we ended the day with 52 species. Lunch was pizza at the Old Oak Inn.

Shawangunk Grasslands May 28 – Tom and Jane, Leaders – 15 club members met at the Grasslands on a hot and humid Memorial Day weekend morning. In spite of the unpleasant weather, we had some nice sightings. We got great looks at Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, American Kestrels, Savannah Sparrows, and especially a number of Grasshopper Sparrows, often singing on top of the grasses. They seemed to outnumber the Savannah Sparrows in the areas we looked at. Eastern Kingbirds and Willow Flycatchers were also present. A visitor named Zach carried an unusual piece of equipment for birdwatching, an aluminum ladder. As he walked out into the refuge we speculated on just what he was doing. When we finally met him, he explained he was a volunteer banding the young American Kestrels. We saw 36 species of birds.

Break One Hundred, 2016

By: Curt McDermott

On May 13 & 14 of this year, our club conducted its annual "Break 100". This was the second consecutive year, in which the participants searched solely within the confines of Orange County. Much as was the case in 2015, our members did well in their quest, without ever leaving its boundaries.

Friday evening's event began at our recently adopted time of 4:00PM and continued through Saturday at 4:00PM. The weather on Friday was unseasonably low, with a high of 64 degrees and low of 48. Saturday was a bit closer to normal temps with a high of 73 and a low of 45, with moderate wind.

It is always interesting to see how each day materializes. Each team typically develops a strategy involving time and logistics, in an effort to maximize their location to species ratio and get the most 'bang for their buck'. It is often the case, where I expect to see others in the same location that we choose to start at, only to wind up seeing no one for hours. Where one location is an obvious choice to one group as a starting spot, a different group has chosen a starting point that they feel equally confident in. By Friday's end, the inevitable had happened. Regardless of each group's starting point, almost all seem to be lured to Mine Road, by the "peent" of the Woodcock and the incessant call of the Whip-poor-will. Then, we separate and it's off for an Owl or two before the short night's rest.

Saturday morning kicks off around 3:30am. We briefly question our sanity, but quickly ignore it and begin our day. By 5:00am we are already running into other folks who share in the craziness. As we sip our coffee and listen intently (while making believe that we are not), we wonder if they all hear what we do. A secret wink to our teammates, acknowledges that we have heard our target bird and we quietly slip away. As quickly as we have met, we all separate, only to bump into each other later in the day, on our quest to see 100 species. At 4:00pm, having done our best to see as much as we could in the previous 24 hours, we wrap it up and head to the "Countdown Dinner".

Having tallied our lists from the previous two days of birding, we drive to our final destination, the Fitzpatrick's house. There, we all gather on the back porch and share stories of trips and birds of days gone by, while giving few specifics of the previous 24 hours. Those stories will have to wait. Some wander Jan and Fitz's home admiring their vast collection of bird art. You may find a painting that catches your eye, or a wood carving or two commemorating one of their very special feeder birds. Others may just relax on the deck

and enjoy the very active feeders. That is until a species shows up that you somehow missed in the previous two days of birding. AAAAARRGG! We then indulge in a feast created by the friends whom have gathered. With a full plate and a cool beverage in hand, we then sit and enjoy, one of my truly favorite gathering of the year. When dinner is complete, the long anticipated count begins while we enjoy the sweets that now fill the hutch.

The countdown is somewhat of a controlled chaos. As we all listen to what species have been seen, and by how many groups, our excitement and desire to learn more, inevitably breaks out into many simultaneous conversations. When we have satisfied our curiosity about the less common sightings, the count continues. This continues until we reach the end of the list of species that have been seen on previous "Break 100's". Then, it is time to go group by group and ask if they have seen or heard anything not previously mentioned. Owed to the fact that in 2015, we started with a clean slate, with a new boundary, new species abound and all have a great opportunity to spot something not before recorded. When all species are counted, each group gives their final tally, which finishes the countdown. We then thank the Fitzpatrick's, as I do now (Thank you Jan and Fitz!), for their wonderful hospitality and after a brief cleanup, we head home for a shower and a bed that never felt quite so good. All the birding is now done....at least until next weekend.

This years "Break" was a real success. It seems that all participants truly enjoyed themselves, which is the ONLY real point to this wonderful day. I look forward to seeing you all again on the Break next year. If you have not participated in the past, please join us in 2017. This can be enjoyed by all levels of birder and all are welcome.

The following is a rundown of this year's event. The checklist is provided by the efforts of Dr. Ajit Antony. Thank you Doctor for your constant contribution to the club.

Teams:

Team A: Kathleen Ashman, Mary Buskey, Joyce DePew, Karen Maloy, Kevin Brady

Team B: Jeff Goulding, Lisa O'Gorman, Karen Miller, Matt Zeitler

Team C: David Baker, Sharon Baker, Alan Wells, Della Wells

Team D: Drs. Liza & Ajit Antony

Team E: Ken McDermott, Steve Schuyler, Curt McDermott, Rob Stone (Friday)

Species seen by two or fewer teams:

Common Loon – Group C - 5 on Orange Lake

Pied-billed Grebe – Group C – 6 ½ Station Rd. (Citgo)

Harrier – Group D – Black Dirt Group E – Indiana Rd.

Sharp-shinned Hawk – Group E - Port Jervis

Sora – Group E – Oil City Rd.

Common Moorhen – Group E – Swamp at Beaver Dam & Eager Rd.

Semipalmated Plover – Group B – camel Farm

Lesser Yellowlegs – Group A – Sugarloaf Swamp Group B – camel Farm

Pectoral Sandpiper – Group D – Camel Farm

Great Black-backed Gull – Group A – Hudson River

Barred Owl – Group E – Schunnemunk Mt.

Red Headed Woodpecker – Group A - Fancher Davidge Park, Middletown

Hairy Woodpecker – Group C – Elks Brox Park Group D – D&H Canal

Peregrine Falcon – Groups B & E – Hawks Nest, Port Jervis

Willow Flycatcher – Group A – Benedict Park

Least Flycatcher – Group E – Box Baum Rd.

Raven – Group C – Rio

Cliff Swallow – Group D – Brady Rd Group E – Stillwell Reservoir and Bull Pond, West Point

Winter Wren – Group D – Old Plank Rd.

Hermit Thrush – Group D

Northern Waterthrush – Group D – Port Orange Rd. Group E – Riverside Park, Port Jervis

Nashville Warbler – Group B – Pochuck Mountain

Wilsons Warbler – Group E – Mine Rd

Meadowlark - Group B – Knapps View, Group D – OC Airport/ Indiana Rd.

New Species

Group A: **Great Egret** – 6 ½ Station Rd.

White-crowned Sparrow – Winding Waters

Gray-cheeked Thrush – Pochuck Mountain

Group B: **Great Egret** – 6 ½ Station Rd.

Gray-cheeked Thrush – Pochuck Mountain

Group D: **Great Egret** – 6 ½ Station Rd.

Great-horned Owl – Mine Rd.

Group E: **Blue-winged Teal** – Great Swamp, Stewart Forest

Bufflehead – Stillwell Reservoir

American Bittern – Oil City Rd

Wilsons Snipe – UNK.

Group Totals:

A: 103

B: 105

C: 96

D: 100

E: 123

WATERFOWL	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	OWLS	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Canada Goose	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Barred Owl	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Mute Swan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					NIGHTJARS									
Wood Duck	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Common Nighthawk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Mallard	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Whip-poor-will	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Lesser Scaup	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					SWIFTS									
Common Merganser	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Chimney Swift	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
GALLINACEOUS BIRDS										HUMMINGBIRDS									
Wild Turkey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Ruby-throated Hummingbird	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
LOONS										KINGFISHERS									
Common Loon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Belted Kingfisher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
GREBES										WOODPECKERS									
Pied-billed Grebe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Red-Headed Woodpecker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
PELICANS & ALLIES										Red-bellied Woodpecker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Double-crested Cormorant	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Downy Woodpecker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
HERONS AND ALLIES										Hairy Woodpecker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Least Bittern	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Northern Flicker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Great Blue Heron	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Pileated Woodpecker	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Green Heron	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					FALCONS									
NEW WORLD VULTURES										American Kestrel	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Black Vulture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Peregrine Falcon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Turkey Vulture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					FLYCATCHERS									
ACCIPITRIDAE										Olive-sided Flycatcher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Bald Eagle	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Eastern Wood Peewee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Northern Harrier	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Acadian Flycatcher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Sharp-shinned Hawk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Alder Flycatcher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Cooper's Hawk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Willow Flycatcher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Red-shouldered Hawk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Least Flycatcher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Broad-winged Hawk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Eastern Phoebe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Red-tailed Hawk	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Great Crested Flycatcher	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
RAILS, COOTS & CRANES										Eastern Kingbird	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Virginia Rail	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					VIREOS									
Sora	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Yellow-throated Vireo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Common Gallinule	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Blue-headed Vireo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
American Coot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Warbling Vireo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
SHOREBIRDS & ALLIES										Red-eyed Vireo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Semipalmated Plover	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					CORVIDS									
Killdeer	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Blue Jay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Spotted Sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					American Crow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Solitary Sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Fish Crow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Greater Yellowlegs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Common Raven	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Lesser Yellowlegs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					LARKS									
Least Sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Horned Lark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Pectoral Sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					SWALLOWS									
Semipalmated Sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Purple Martin	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
American Woodcock	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Tree Swallow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Ring-billed Gull	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					N. Rough-winged Swallow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Herring Gull	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Bank Swallow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Great Black-Backed Gull	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Cliff Swallow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Common Tern	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Barn Swallow	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
PIGEONS & DOVES										TITMOUSE, NUTHATCHES, CREEPER									
Rock Pigeon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Black-capped Chickadee	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Mourning Dove	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Tufted Titmouse	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Eurasian Collared-Dove	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					White-breasted Nuthatch	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
CUCKOOS										Red-breasted Nuthatch	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Black-billed Cuckoo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					Brown Creeper	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				
Yellow-billed Cuckoo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓														

5/13 - High 64° Low 48° 2016
5/14 - " 73° Low 45° WIND

1

Why I bird

Why do I bird? Let me count the ways:

I started birdwatching when I was around ten years old. My father, Donald, would feed the backyard birds suet and sunflower seeds in the harshest of winters. I got such a kick at a young age by watching the antics of the black capped chickadees, the red bellied woodpeckers, and the white breasted nuthatches. Back then, I did not have a zoom lens camera--just a Kodak 110 windup camera that took distant shots. The only bird I could get close to was a black capped chickadee. I put my hand out, full of sunflower seed, and on the coldest day, several would come and go from my hand. The titmice were a bit more furtive, and only occasionally would I get a tufted titmouse to land on my hand.

The one bird that really got me interested in birdwatching was the red-bellied woodpecker. We had a rotting, old maple tree in the front of our yard. Way up high, a red-bellied woodpecker would be calling out daily and be showing off his crimson head. When that tree had to be cut down in 1988, I remember being a bit sad that it had once been home to perhaps a few woodpeckers during its time on our property.

My father and I had a great bond together, watching all the birds in the canopy in our yard, sitting in the far upper corner of our yard, and spotting the different migratory warblers in May of 1987. One day, we saw the most resplendent Blackburnian warbler high up in a White Oak tree; this male did not move all day. It was something I remember to this day.

Before I even birded, I do remember many times being attracted to birds in the town of my birth, Cornwall. Cornwall has a municipal pond with swans, and, when my father was the caretaker for the Riverlight Park (the Lighthouse for the Blind) in the 70s, I would sit and watch the mute swans and mallards by the pond close by to the park. I do remember one swan the locals called Butch--I adored him.

Another bird I remember from childhood was when I used to go to the Museum of the Hudson Highlands--crowbar, the crow, was always there to say "Hello". He said it with such vigor and would do a bird dance of his own. There was also the Great Horned Owl, and the different owls that were also on display.

I considered myself a backyard birder until after I graduated with my BA from SUNY New Paltz. Around 1993, I heard about two spots in Orange County: two birding spots that are called "important birding areas, or IBAs"--6 and one half station road in Goshen, NY, and the Basha Kill, near Wurtsboro, located near the border of Orange and Sullivan counties. I was hooked on birds! The Basha Kill had so many species in late April and May, I was just agape at the diversity of colors and sounds of the wood warblers that came from far away to breed for the summer. I can remember walking Haven Road and picking

up close to 25 species of wood warblers along the water's edge in 1994. I can remember because I saved my pocket notebook scrawlings from back then. This was before digital photography, and before eBird, and smartphones. I was enjoying every moment, and just marveled at being amongst a palette of living, breathing art.

Why do I bird? Well, several reasons. There are perhaps close to ten thousand species of birds around the world, and while I probably will never get to see and hear all of these birds, the diversity of birds in song, color, and size makes them interesting.

Birding takes one away from one's own inner thoughts: sometimes we get caught up in our thoughts, and birding really lets me wind down, go at a slower pace, and lets me stop, look, and listen. Remember that phrase about crossing the street? It applies to birding as well. When I watch and listen for birds, my senses become much more alert to the sounds going around me. There is no distracting noise in nature, such as an air raid siren, a deafening crowd, a honking car, a screeching tire, or any other manmade alarm that beeps to tell you that you have a new message on your iPhone. Out in the unpaved natural world, there is reality, something that one can see and hear for real: it is not fictional... a bald eagle flying overhead, an osprey flying overhead with a fish in its talons, a belted kingfisher hovering over a marsh making its distinct rattling call.

There is nothing in nature that makes me want to panic and run for cover: it is what it is. When I hear a wood thrush at the end of my day long hike, I thank god that I am sharing the moment with that singing bird. I am also thankful that at 3500 feet on Allen Mountain in the Adirondacks, I can see and hear Boreal Chickadees with my naked eye. Recently, in early July, I saw two clutches of ruffed grouse and their young on two hikes while in the Adirondacks. I had never seen grouse with their young before. So, birding gives me the opportunity to see and hear something I've never experienced before. Something that is not mundane, not a trend, not a rumor, but real.

Birding is a lifelong passion; many people do it for life. It is something that can be done from one's window with the naked eye, from a car, or on foot. It is one of the activities that one can do for a long time. I doubt there are ninety year old triathletes out there. Perhaps there are, but not as many as the amount of elder birdwatchers still enjoying the birds.

Dave Hultgren

The Chase

David Baker

As we birders get a bit “more mature”, we find it more and more difficult to add to our life-lists without making a special effort to get out and go after a rare or at least more elusive species. We keep our eyes glued to e-bird’s rare bird alerts or the postings by fellow club members regarding some bird that has for one reason or another not made it onto “the list”. Often, going after (or chasing) such a bird is a simple enough matter since the reported bird just happens to be here in Orange County. Such rarities as Black-whistling ducks, a lone Henslow’s sparrow, and Sandhill cranes have made “layovers” here in the county in the not-so-distant past, and when a report comes across the web regarding these birds, it’s easy enough to hop in the RV and head out, hoping for the best.

It’s not always that easy or that promising, however. I recall a number of years ago chasing after a Northern Hawk owl which had taken up a winter residence in upstate New York. I knew the area since my Dad’s family was originally from the “Dacks”. After several days of procrastination, my wife, Sharon, and I decided to make the journey. The reports had been quite specific right down to the coordinates of the utility pole where this beautiful owl had been spotted. We plugged the numbers into the GPS and we were off. 5 ½ hours later, we pulled up to the site. “You have arrived at your destination” declared “Sal”, our Garmin unit. We exited the RAV, looked up, and there was the Hawk owl as promised. After about an hour of watching and photographing the bird, we decided to make the trek back to Highland Falls as it was already December 22 and preparations for Christmas had been temporarily put on the back burner.



David Baker 'CS

Ah, if it were always that easy!

Our most recent chase involved the rare Zenaida dove. As stated in the Audubon Field Guide, “When Audubon explored Florida in the 1830’s, he apparently found Zenaida doves nesting on the Florida Keys. Today the species is only a very rare visitor to Florida from the islands of the Caribbean.” When the bird showed up on the Florida rare-bird site, “Bird Brains”, several of my Florida birding buddies and I decided to make the 6 hour run from our winter home in New Smyrna Beach down to Long Key. Two members of our party, including Mearns member Joe Trapani, had made the trip earlier and had a good idea of where the bird might be found. Finding

probably the only one of its species in Florida and possibly the United States in dense vegetation of the keys can be daunting, so all the input we could garner was well received. As we headed down to the keys, reports of sightings of the bird became more and more sporadic. Was this because the bird had moved on or had enough people already found it that it was now "old news". When we arrived at the site, we hiked back into the trail among the palmettos to the general area where the bird had been seen in the past. After a half hour or so, most of the party moved on, but two of us decided to wait it out. During the three hours we sat patiently ready to ambush our quarry, I realized what a great advantage it is to have a fellow birder who serves as an insect attractant. While she withstood the onslaught of chiggers and no-see-ums, sacrificing herself and amassing almost 40 welts from the little predators, I went unscathed! Regardless, after about 2 ½ hours, a dove flew into our view and onto the trail. I ripped off about 20 shots with my Nikon and then quickly went to the bins to see what I had gotten. A lovely Mourning dove! In frustration, we decided to give it another half hour and then move on. With ten minutes left in our "window", the dove, the real Zenaida dove, flew into plain site and remained there for several minutes before walking back into the foliage along the trailside. We had outlasted the dove and came away with a new lifer. It's a wonderful thing when a "chase" results in a win.



A Possible Solution

I may have finally found the answer! To What? You might reasonably ask. To a nagging dilemma I've faced since becoming a "birder" - - and that is: How and Why do birds have so many ways to defeat our hearing/ spotting/ identifying them? .The ABA (American Birding Assoc.) has a widely disseminated "Ethics for Birders". I propose a similar Code for Birds.

I suspect the "Why" is a natural response to the disrespect and damage that we've done to the planet and the environment. Thus, to a certain degree, the adversarial retorts noted herein by our would-be/should-be avian friends we've brought upon ourselves.

This epiphany came to me on a recent trip to an area where I'd not been before; a beautiful spot with every conceivable habitat. The weather was salubrious too, and being weary from my long drive, with bins in hand I rested against a large pin oak, one with a commanding view of the varied cover. I resisted the drowsiness accompanying the early morning sun to concentrate on the bird sounds that were coming from a nearby thicket.

Peering into the brush, I was able to discern a Great Horned Owl perched on an eye-level branch, apparently "lecturing" to a varied group of birds - all facing him in rapt attention - (some even seemed to be taking notes as if at some outdoor seminar.)

The GHO, obviously in charge, rattled off a proposed agenda. From his manner I had the impression that this was not an impromptu gathering but one of a scheduled series. With heightened interest I continued to eavesdrop.

"OK" he challenged, "have you all reviewed the Diversion Materials?" Many primaries were raised in apparent confirmation. A Flicker questioned, "I get the part about only revealing incomplete body silhouettes, rapid and frequent position changes, and feeding in the thickest leaf cover, but how are we supposed to keep ourselves backlighted at all times?" The "professor" acknowledged the difficulty, but commented, "Keep practicing!"

A Junco asked, "Can we talk about false molting and sessional feathering again?" The Owl: "You'll recall that the former is the intentional removal of those feathers that provide diagnostic evidence; in your case you might choose to shed your outer retrices. Also, you can use mud, pollen, or other natural ingredients to cover distinct body areas and serve as camouflage. The latter is self-explanatory: Hang onto juvenile plumage - shed breeding plumage ASAP! The idea's to look "different", not what's expected".

A Wood Thrush, with obvious glee, offered, "I think the vocal seminars are the best! There's nothing that causes more indecisions with birders than songs or delivery

patterns that they don't recognize. I've been practicing giving a long, slow introductory note." A Veery laughingly quipped, "I've reversed my song from a downward spiral to an upward one- *ala* Bicknell's." "Yep", replied the GHO, "Confusion's the name of the game - and ain't it FUN!"

I was shocked to hear such blatant adversarial and mocking opinions and to realize we're seen by the birds as "The Enemy" and that we're in an undeclared war. We HAVE to change their mind-sets. To achieve that constructive goal, as an initial campaign I propose the following Coo-Mandments as a Code for Birds to exemplify. To Wit:

- 1- No intentional backlighted positioning;
- 2- No intentional directly overhead positioning;
- 3- No intentional song manipulations or ventriloquizing;
- 4- No skulking;
- 5- No unnecessary flitting-about;
- 6- No intentional feather altering;
- 7- No intentional hiding-in or use of inappropriate habitats;
- 8- No tantalizing nano-second appearances;
- 9- No secret escape routes with intent to avoid detection;
- 10- Treat All Birders with respect, even those w/o feeders.

Let's hope that the GHO and his brethren will accept these ideas as an earnest attempt by birders to reconcile any past differences and to forge a new compatibility.

COOX2

Author's Notes: The Optics Industry has been solicited to assist with funding.

Allegations that the above events were a drowsy-induced dream sequence are unfounded.

Arizona - Summer 2016

Birding from high mountains to desert lowlands

By Ernie Welch

On this my sixth trip to Arizona I decided to do some target birding. Well, maybe decided isn't the right word. In my previous five trips I've managed to rack up over 200 species for my AZ list, including many wonderful life birds. Anyone remember their first view of a trogon? I do. So perhaps at this point there are only target birds left. I finished up my school year, packed a bag and binoculars, and flew out. My target birders were two great guys I met last year on a birding tour in Chiapas, Mexico - Gordon Karre of Phoenix and Chris Rohrer of Tucson. And of course in Tucson I would be staying with my oldest friend (high school, college) and birding buddy Fran Dostillio. Here's the list I sent to the boys:

Target Life Birds – Arizona: June 25-July 1, 2016

This list reflects possible species for the White Mts., the Phoenix area and SE AZ/Tucson. It also reflects a bunch of hard to impossible to get species. At this point in my AZ birding there is little low hanging fruit to pick. Any assistance for a poor, needy New Yorker would be greatly appreciated.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| - Montezuma Quail | -Lewis's Woodpecker | -Crissal Thrasher |
| - Rosy-faced Lovebird | -Williamson's Sapsucker | -Five-striped Sparrow |
| - Owls: | -Dusky Flycatcher | |
| • Western-Screech | -Buff-breasted Flycatcher | |
| • Whiskered-Screech | -Thick-billed Kingbird | |
| • Flammulated | - Clark's Nutcracker | |
| • Elf | -Pinyon Jay | |
| • Spotted | -Gray Vireo | |
| - Poorwill | -Juniper Titmouse | |
| - Buff-collared Nightjar | -American Dipper | |
| - Mexican Whip-poor-will | -Black-capped Gnatcatcher | |
| - Calliope Hummingbird | -Bendire's Thrasher | |

Well, a guy can dream, no? I started in Kiwanis Park for flocks of nativized Rosy-faced Lovebirds, which were abundant. The next morning we abandoned Phoenix's 115 degree heat for the cool White Mts., the area of Greer and Springerville, 3 hours north-east of the city. Every morning we birded, we were surrounded by cool, flower and pine scented air. It was delightful. The drive up the Salt River canyon was interesting for a scramble up a rocky hillside along the state highway to chase a singing Gray Vireo. It was a tease, a no show. The Greer area is surrounded by high elevation grasslands as well as pine forest. It produced a life bird I overlooked on my target list - many beautiful Mountain Bluebirds! They shone their own deep shade of blue on many a fence post and road sign. We also picked up a breeding pair of Lewis's Woodpeckers bringing food to their nest in a dead pine. We were in downtown Show Low, AZ, across from a bunch of strip malls. Later in the day produced a juvenile Williamson's Sapsucker in Greer. The adult made its appearance the next day. Day two found us at a bridge overpass called Sheep Crossing at the Little Colorado River. We had an American Dipper bringing food to its hungry, noisy chicks in a large globe shaped nest under the bridge. Life bird number 800!

A walk up the Mt. Baldy trail from the parking area produced a distant view of a jay-like bird with a distinctive bill perched atop a tall fir. Walked on. Finally the bird came into view as did a 2nd one - Clark's Nutcracker! We had the Lewis and Clark birds for the trip.

As we descended back into the desert inferno we finally got ok views of singing Gray Vireos on the lower reaches of Mt. Ord, north of Phoenix. Onward to Tucson. The next morning Gordon and I had an interesting morning at a water recharge facility called the Gilbert Water Ranch. Photographers were out waiting on the Least Bittern to show. It did not. I drove down to Tucson later that am to continue to work my list. The help I received from Fran and Chris was invaluable. Fran and I spent the day in the Santa Rita Mts. We birded lower Florida Canyon and had a dozen Mexican Jays, and several singing male Varied Buntings. I never get tired of looking at that bird. Our jot up into Madera Canyon and to the Santa Rita Lodge produced a flock of turkeys, numerous first birds for the trip, and a Black-tailed Rattlesnake in the parking area near the observation benches. We spent an evening in Madera Canyon and heard every night bird we went out for - Buff-collared Nightjar, Poorwill, Mexican Whippoorwill, Elf, Western Screech-, and Whiskered Screech-Owls. None showed themselves, but it was amazing to hear so many. The big adventure of the trip was a rocky, rough ride down into California Gulch near the Mexican border. The Five-striped Sparrow lives here in south facing canyons that drain into Mexico in Santa Cruz Co. A very restricted range bird in the ABA checklist area that I wanted to see. They were singing on the hillside and boy did we get a good look. As my friend Fran would say, "Crippling looks".

[Five-striped Sparrow (*Amphispiza quinquestriata*). Awesome photo by Chris Rohrer]



We finished off the morning with great looks at Black-capped Gnatcatchers. The weather in the Tucson area had been very kind. Monsoons had moved in but didn't rain on us. They did moderate the temperatures so each birding day was in the 80s. All in all it was an amazingly successful trip with nine life birds with 25 eBird checklists filed reporting 157 species. And yes, there are more trips out to AZ as there are more target birds left to chase.

BOB'S POP-UP TRIPS

Bunting Hunt – 2/6/16: Second times are the charm! That's how the Painted Bunting Connecticut sound pop-up played out. With reports that the Painted Bunting we saw in Stamford last year after our Rye trip was back I decided to make it the goal of a pop-up trip. We reached the bunting's hangout around 10:00 AM with word that the bird was seen going into his favorite resting spot, a tall holly flush up against the south face of a small house behind which there is a nice feeder setup. After 30 minutes and no bird we decided to bird Greenwich Point and come back around 3:00 PM, which we did and Voila – there it was! We stayed for at least 15 minutes soaking up the gorgeous colors of the stunning male Painted Bunting as he sunned himself and hopped about (looking at him through a spotting scope from 20 feet was truly fabulous). Talking with the home owner (an avid birder) this was the 8th year this bird has come to this spot to spend the winter!! Besides the bunting, Greenwich Point produced some good sightings which included good numbers of Long-tailed Ducks, Common Goldeneyes, Bufflehead and Brant with smaller numbers of Red-breasted Mergansers, American Black Ducks, Horned Grebes and White-winged Scoters. In addition we spotted all three gulls, at least 20 Great Blue Herons, plus lots of American Robins and some Hermit Thrushes at the holly grove. With the addition of Gadwall, Ring-necked Ducks, Common Merganser, Pied-billed Grebe, Bald Eagle and both vultures that we saw on our journey to and fro plus the usual mix of passerines we came up with 49 species for the day.

Saturday 2/27/16: While it was a bit cool to start today, it gradually warmed up, and with little wind the 17 of us were quite comfortable as we birded the lakes surrounding Newburgh: Washington, Orange, Crestview, and the Walmart pond plus a short walk on North Ridge Road. Thankfully ducks were on the move due to the warm weather of late but their numbers were not too impressive yet. We did have a nice mix though with Mallard, American Black Duck, Gadwall (nice looks at Walmart), Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck (good numbers on Crestview) and Common and Hooded Mergansers. Other birds of note for the morning were Bald Eagle, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, American Tree Sparrow and one Yellow-rumped Warbler (the first one I've seen since last November), plus Yellow-breasted Sapsucker and Northern Flicker for a total of 38 species. After lunch Herb and I checked Brown's Pond, Beaver Dam Lake and Twin Arch Road and added Bufflehead, Black Vulture, Eastern Bluebird and House Finch to bring the day's total to 42. What was most noticeable today was that we had no wrens, American Goldfinch or White-throated Sparrows.

Goosepond Plus – 3/23/16: Today's trip went very well for the seven members that came out. We started at 8:30 AM and ended at 1:00 PM with 59 species under our belts and some real nice sightings. Eastern Phoebe's were ever present today as were American Robins, Eastern Bluebirds, and lots of Song Sparrows. A new Open Space Institute property at the south end of Goosepond State Park provided our only Great Blue Heron, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hairy Woodpecker, Dark-eyed Junco, Fox, Field and White-throated Sparrows and it was quite the show three male Eastern Bluebirds put on for a lone female. Round Lake in Monroe produced a pair of Ruddy Ducks, Double-crested Cormorants and our first Ring-necked Ducks and Buffleheads of the day, while Walton Lake had a nice group of 75 Common Mergansers. We

next headed to Sugar Loaf and passed a flooded field loaded with Ring-necked Ducks, some Woodies, Gadwall and American Wigeon, but our best sightings were yet to come. At Sugar Loaf we scanned the muddy pond and had nice looks at Green-winged Teal, American Wigeon, Gadwall, Tree Swallows, Killdeer, and best of all, 5 Rusty Blackbirds and 15 Wilson's Snipe. By now it was finally starting to warm up nicely (it got up to 68 degrees today) as we checked out Wickam Lake (Pied-billed Grebe and American Black Duck), Wisner Road (Eastern Meadowlark, American Kestrel, and Cooper's Hawk), and the Warwick Town Hall (nice close looks at Gadwall) before heading off to lunch at 1:00 PM. Other birds of note this morning were both vultures, Ring-billed and Herring Gulls, Northern Flicker, Pileated Woodpecker, Fish Crow, Carolina Wren, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbirds and House Finch plus the usual species. After lunch at the Harvest we hit the Oil City Road platform where we added American Coot, Northern Harrier and Bald Eagle to our list. Then it was off to the Camel Farm where we saw more snipe. Warren Turf Farm was next where we were awed by a large flock of several hundred Horne Larks wheeling about over the fields. With patience they finally settled down near us and we were able to get great looks at 2 breeding plumaged Lapland Longspurs and several females. We also spied a Snow Bunting and a Savannah Sparrow before heading to Breeze Hill Road, our last stop and our 67th bird, one Snow Goose. It was a nice finish to a great day of birding!

Goosepond Plus – 4/10/16: Here it is the 10th of April and it's 20 degrees cooler than our last foray here back on March 23rd! Even so, by lunch time today we bested the March trip tally by one bird with a total of 68 species. After lunch we added 7 more species to finish up with a very nice 75 species for an early April trip. Sugar Loaf, again, was the jewel of the day with very good and close views of 40 + Green-winged Teal, 30+ Wilson's Snipe and at least 16 Rusty Blackbirds. Glenmere Lake produced Greater Scaup and 6 Pied-billed Grebes. Walton Lake had 6 Common Loons plus Hooded and Common Mergansers, while Round Lake gave us Osprey, Bufflehead, Double-crested Cormorants, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Brown Creeper. A flooded field near Sugar Loaf again produced the most ducks of the area with over 100 Ring-necked Ducks, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler Wood Duck, more Green-winged Teal and our only Blue-winged Teal. Other notables in our morning travels were: Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Bluebird, Cedar Waxwing, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Towhee, Dark-eyed Junco, Field, Swamp, Song and White-throated Sparrows, Tree and Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Belted Kingfisher, Pileated Woodpecker, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel and Wild Turkey. After our stop at the Harvest Inn for lunch, we gave Oil City Road, the Camel Farm and Warren Turf a scan where we added American Coot, American Black Duck, Cooper's Hawk, Horned Lark, Savannah Sparrow, House Finch and Greater Yellowlegs and many more kestrels (12 for the day). We could have continued on after 4:00 PM and probably reached 80 species but our bodies told us otherwise. If you haven't noticed, most of us are getting older.

Goosepond Plus – 4/20/16: Eleven members showed up on a very pleasant April day to tally 79 species for what is the third time I've run a pop-up trip to the region of Goosepond State Park with an after lunch tour of the black dirt areas. New birds today since our last trip on 4/10 were Lesser Scaup, Sharp-shinned, Broad-winged and Red-shouldered Hawks, Common Raven, Green Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, Purple Martin and Barn Swallow, Louisiana Waterthrush,

Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and Chipping Sparrows. By now most of the ducks have departed but we still managed a decent number of Ring-necked Ducks, Bufflehead and Green-winged Teal with only a few Mallards, American Black and Wood Ducks, Gadwall and Common Merganser. Double-crested Cormorants were plentiful and the only loons we had were flyovers. Belted Kingfisher, Eastern Towhee and Great Blue Heron numbers increased since the last trip while White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Juncos were still to be found but in lower numbers. Rusty Blackbird and Wilson's Snipe were still at Sugar Loaf and Tree Swallows were easy to find. Other noteworthy sightings today were: Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Field, Swamp and Savannah Sparrows, Northern Rough-winged Swallows, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, American Coot, Killdeer Eastern Phoebe, Fish Crow, Horned Lark and Eastern Meadowlark. As you can see, these trips produce a good mix of birds that requires a bit of driving from spot to spot and the different habitats (field, forest, lake, stream, marsh, etc.) but it is well worth it.

Bob Slechta

THIS AND THAT

In a couple of e-mails I asked members for some "short stuff or blurbs". I actually received three full length articles as well. Many thanks. Here are the blurbs. Think about sending something along for a future Orange Feather. Jan Fitzpatrick

From Carlotta Shearson: Twice during spring migration season this year, I visited family who live on the banks of Lake Erie in northeast Ohio, and these visits resulted in a couple of fun birding experiences. On a blustery day in mid-March when the wind was blowing spray off the wave tops 3000 to 4000 Red-breasted Mergansers passed by the house over the course of several hours, heading east on the lake, less than 100 yards out from the beach. It was great fun to watch them periodically zipping up and over the waves and doing their salute-curtsey courtship display, with squadrons of 30 or 40 occasionally taking off to speed east, low over the water, ahead of the others who were content to drift on the current. On a visit early in May, I witnessed the diurnal migration of thousands upon thousands of Blue Jays over the course of several days. Unlike the warblers that congregate in May at Magee Marsh in northwest Ohio before flying across the lake when the wind is favorable, Blue Jays are apparently reluctant to fly over the lake, so when they arrive at the edge of land, they turn and fly parallel to the shoreline. Throughout each day that I was there, they flew east over the house in loose groups of 30 to 50, one group after another. I've read that a similar phenomenon occurs in the fall on the Canadian shore of the lake. In fact, hawk watchers supposedly counted a record 264,410 Blue Jays on September 28, 2001, at Holiday Beach Migration Observatory in Ontario.

More about Blue Jays from Carol Weiss: July 8 – A Blue Jay fed two youngsters on my deck while I watched from an upstairs window. The young birds were almost fully fledged and sat still while waiting for Mom or Dad to return with food. One of the two would flutter its wings just before the adult returned. I was able to take a few pictures.

Joe Trapani had the following experiences: On July 6th I boarded a Delta flight from Kennedy Airport and flew to Seattle, Washington to meet a group of birders from New Jersey Audubon. The next morning twelve participants and the leaders, Scot Barnes and Linda Mack, drove east on I 90 toward the city of Ellensburg. Stopping along the way we birded in the Cascades. Huge pines gave a new meaning to warbler's neck but the forests were beautiful to walk in looking for birds. The mountains block the rain and as we travelled east we got into dryer sagebrush country. We had good looks at Vaux's and White-throated Swifts. It's always great to see Western Tanagers and Lewis's Woodpeckers. A few days later we headed back west toward Olympic National Park. Staying in Port Angeles overlooking the Strait of Juan de Fuca we were able to get good scope looks of Common Murres, Pigeon Guillemots and Rhinoceros Auklets. There were new gulls to be found: California, Glaucous-winged and Heermann's. Another plus was the restaurants. Every one of them had lists of good local micro beers. I recommend a visit to Olympic National Park's Visitor's Center at Hurricane Ridge. You are surrounded by snow-covered mountains and you may see a Gray Jay.

Lynn Barber had four hen turkeys and about 20 offspring in her yard on July 18th. She says, "I'm excited because maybe they will scratch for food between my door and the bird feeders so I don't have to shovel this winter." If they are around all you have to do is scatter corns or seed and they keep a very clean trail to the feeders and car.

The night before I sent out my request Amy Greher and her husband had this sighting: Traveling back to Dorset, Vermont from Danby last night (July 17) around 10:00 PM along a dirt road deep in the woods, my husband and I spotted a Barred Owl sitting low in a tree. We stopped, backed up a bit and watched the owl. It proceeded to fly down in front of the car, spread its wings, hopped around on the ground and then swooped back and forth in the road in the headlights. It was no more than 15 feet ahead of us. We watched the show, mesmerized for about 2 minutes. The bird then flew into a nearby tree, watched us for a minute or two and then flew off. We believe there must have been a juvenile bird somewhere in the dark woods that we did not see because the parent bird wanted our attention on him/her rather than on the somewhat helpless younger bird. It was quite a spectacular, unexpected experience.

Membership

It's time to welcome our newest Mearns Club members: Dan Samperi, Kingston; Renee Hewitt, Rosendale; Diane Rawson, Highland; Rick and Sheri Lisker, Cornwall, Geary f. Chumard, Middletown; and a "welcome back" to Ernie Welch, Poughkeepsie. We look forward to birding with all of you in the coming months and having you attend our future meetings.

Linda Strohl

FALL & WINTER FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE – E.A. MEARNS CLUB

September trips (see last Feather for details): 9/3-Black dirt; 9/10-Doodletown; 9/24-Bashakill; 9/28 (Wed)-Stewart State Forest.

October 1 – Hudson Highlands Nature Museum Outdoor Discovery Center – (Kenridge Farm) Meet Dave Baker (446-4030) at 8:30 AM. Lincoln's Sparrow is a good bet.

October 5 (Wed) – Oil City Road – Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) at the platform at 8:30 AM. A good mix of birds make use of this location on their way south.

October 8 – 6 ½ Station Road – Karen Miller (381-3283) will lead. Meet her at 8:30 AM. This is a first time field trip here for the fall.

October 12 (Wed) – Goosepond – Meet Bill Iannone (783-7467) at the boardwalk trail on Rte. 17M at 8:00 AM. It should be good for warblers, sparrows, etc.

October 16 (Sun) – Winding Water Trail – Sparrows are the specialty and Curt McDermott (549-5596) will find them for us. Be there (1/4 mile west of the platform on Oil City Road) at 8:30.

October 22 – Storm King Art Center – Enjoy the walk at this unique location (admission FREE) with Bob Slechta (534-7029) when the trees are getting nice color. Be there at 8:30 AM.

October 29 – Oil City Road – Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) at the platform at 8:30 AM to look for egrets, ducks, shorebirds, sparrows, etc., etc.

November 12 – Black dirt – Scour the area for larks, buntings, pipits and who knows what else with Joe Cullen (236-4869). Meet at the Jolly Onion at 8:30

November 19 – Eastern Orange lakes – Meet Linda Strohl (496-3021) at the Newburgh Walmart parking lot, NW corner, at 8:30 AM. We will see what ducks are heading south.

November 26 – Shawangunk Grasslands – Meet Tom and Jane (255-0324, 255-0565) at the refuge at 4:30 PM. Northern Harriers, and most likely, Short-eared Owls should be in.

December 3 & 4 – Cape Ann, MA – For trip details contact Jodi Brodsky at 282-1058 or jsbbirder@verizon.net. This is a great trip for grebes, alcids, eiders, scoters, etc.

December 17 – Eastern Orange Christmas Bird Count – If you've never partaken and want to, contact Bob Slechta (534-7029).

January 14 NYS Winter Duck Count – If interested, contact Bob Slechta (534-7029) as soon as you decide so that he can assign areas to cover.

January 28 – Eagle Trip – Meet Gerhard Patsch (255-5840) at the Rte. 202/6 "Goat Trail" pull off at 8:30 AM. 100+ eagles are quite possible!

February 12 – Black dirt – Longspurs, Snow Buntings and Rough-legged Hawks are likely. Meet Curt McDermott (549-5596) at the Jolly Onion at 8:30 AM.

February 25 – "Hudson Hunt" – Meet Gerhard Patsch (255-5840) at the (Rte. 32) North Plank Road McDonald's (near Price Chopper and Shoprite) at 8:30 AM to hunt for ducks, gulls, falcons, eagles and more.

March 4– Black dirt region – Blackbirds and Snow Geese should be on the move. Meet Joe Cullen (236-4869) at the Jolly Onion at 8:30AM.

March 11 – Rye – Meet Jodi Brodsky (282-1058) at Rye Playland parking lot at 8:30 AM for grebes, goldeneyes, loons, Purple Sandpipers and so forth.

March 18 – Bashakill – Meet Jeff Goulding (764-7207) at the Stop Sign Trail at 8:30 AM. We'll look for Rusty Blackbirds, Fox Sparrows, ducks, etc.

March 25 – Oil City Road – with Kathy Ashman (294-6140). Ducks, ducks, and more ducks! Be at the platform at 8:30 AM.

If there are weekends with no trip scheduled keep an eye on the Mearns Yahoo site for a possible pop-up trip. Bob Slechta

NOTES

The phone number is given for each leader. If you have any doubts about a trip happening due to weather CALL either the night before or in the morning (the leader will be up checking the weather too, so CALL!) You can also keep an eye on the Mearns Yahoo site for trip cancellations or changes.

If you lead a trip you are responsible for sending a write up to Jan Fitzpatrick, 1 Keith Place, Campbell Hall, NY 10916 or fjfitz@frontiernet.net. Please include the number of species seen, number of participants, weather conditions and highlights of the trip. If you post the trip on line please send me an expanded report fleshing out the details of the on-line posting. Thank you!

DUES

Renewals are due by January 1, 2017. \$10.00 individual; \$8.00 senior/student; \$15.00 family. You will get either the mailed or electronic version that you requested in the past. If you wish to switch you will need to let us know. If you have a new address or email we will also need to know that information. Make checks payable to Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club and mail to Linda Strohl 8 Park Road, Salisbury Mills, NY 12577.
