

# Putnam Highlands Audubon Society

## Chapter Newsletter

Volume 111, No. 4 July - August 2011



### Birdathon 2011 Overview **Too Much Fun?**

by Marc Breslav  
Birdathon Chairperson

Sometimes the birds are there on the day of Birdathon. And, sometimes, such as was the case this year on May 14, they're not. Inclement weather can be a factor, but in our case, only one of the teams experienced any significant rain, and none a show stopper downpour.

The weather had been fairly constant with winds prevailing in the "wrong" direction for several days, so there may have been no fronts to create the migratory bird fallouts that typically resupply migrants before Birdathon.

The pooled total was 178 species, the lowest total in the 11 years since the teams have consolidated their efforts. The record high was 203 in 2008.

Ralph Odell's Putnam Valley Bogtrotters covered Long Island and New York City, and turned in a total of 126. The Bogtrotters had set the record of 157 three years ago for the area. The low count for this area was 115 in 2004.

Lew Kingsley and his Garrison Gumshoes covered Orange, Ulster and Sullivan Counties. Their total was a respectable 122, well above the low count of 108 in 2003. The record for this area was 136, set in 2007.

With his team, Eric Lind, the new captain of the Wappingers Creakers, scoured Putnam and Dutchess Counties, plus Doodletown and Iona. Their total was 99 in an area that has a low count of 96, from 2001, and a high count of 127 set in 2009.

One southern species had never before been recorded on our Birdathons. Bogtrotter ace Rich Anderson heard a Yellow-throated Warbler at Hempstead Lake State Park on Long Island. It turns out there were several reports there for the bird that week, but we hadn't known about it.

This year, for some unknown reason arrived at synchronously, several of us planning Birdathon were secretly intent on making it more fun, given how grueling it is for the players. There were admonitions calling for a chowder stop for the shore team, and "less driving, more birding." Indeed, by all reports, the teams had fun.

In the immediate "post-game" analysis for the birders, I sought to give a reason why all the stats were low. Grasping at straws, I blamed fun.

An immediate chorus of boos on the listserve erupted, accompanied by an extraordinary email thread that gave voice to reminiscences and reflections on what truly matters about Birdathon. In my response, seemingly out of the nowhere, came the words of Commander Cody (a comedic 1970s country rocker):

"A whole lotta things that I never done, But I ain't never had too much fun."

The watch words of our Birdathon go beyond fun, and include remembrance, tradition and community. Our continued annual remembrance of Marty McGuire, and Doug and Jim Rod, is a special part of the event.

But built upon the memories is the annual tradition of over two decades. And the community that has been spawned. Indeed many of us owe several fast friendships to Birdathon.

For the first time in years, all the teams were represented at the countdown. Why? In a first, at Arlene Seymour's suggestion, the tally was held the day after Birdathon, rather than at 9 pm the night of. So many rested, clean people! The tally is part of what keeps the memories and builds the sense of community.

Dollars raised as of press time were \$10,387.60 from 96 donors. As of July 30 last year, 94 donors contributed \$10,368.30.

Thanks again to all the birders for their continued willingness to subject themselves to the grueling schedule of Birdathon. Thank you as well to all those who solicited pledges, and to Nancy Durr and Angela Tremain for organizing that effort. And of course, special appreciation to all those who made pledges.

Thank you all for your dedication to this great event.

**Putnam Valley Bogtrotters** *Jane Alexander, Rich Anderson, Marc Breslav, Ralph Odell (captain) and Arlene Seymour*

Rich, Marc, Arlene and Ralph met, on time (4:00 AM), and drove South to meet Jane at Ardsley. The decision, a good one, to go together in one vehicle meant close quarters, good conversation and, except for Marc's, limited luggage. Rich was elected to drive and later voted driver of the year.

Hempstead Lake State Park, our first stop, with its beautiful oak canopy is a great place for migrating warblers. We listed Redstarts, Warbling Vireo, Yellow Warblers and, a new species for the PHAS Birdathon list, thanks to Rich, a Yellow-throated Warbler. We also saw one of the greatest threats to birds and, a serious problem needing attention in state parks-- a feral cat with a bird in its mouth. Perhaps the best birding spot in the park was cordoned off for a boy scout camping event and had to be skipped. As the scouts began to chirp and emerge from the hundreds of tents we began our move on to Jones Beach State Park.

Along the way to Jones Beach we added Great Egret, Common Tern, Osprey, Fish and American Crow, Boat-tailed Grackle and close-up looks at Brown Thrashers. At the marina we found Willets, Least Sandpiper, Semi-palmated Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher and Least Terns. Birding along the way to the West End, Ralph and Jane watched a pair of Indigo Buntings gathering dandelion down apparently for nest building. Later along the same stretch of road we saw and heard a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher.

The trek to the West End jetty was great beginning with Horned Lark, Northern Harrier, Piping Plovers on nests, many Northern Gannets, Sanderlings, and Roseate Terns. At the jetty we did find the annually

sought after Purple Sandpipers. A little more time at the jetty and we saw two pairs of Common Eider, Ruddy Turnstones, a Surf Scoter, Common Loon and a Merlin.

Later we moved on to Forest Park and its famed water hole for warblers and, warblers we found, including Tennessee, Nashville, Yellow-rumped, Yellow, Black-throated Green, Black and White, Blackpoll and Cape May.

We saw the only rain of the day, a light shower, on the way to our last stop, Jamaica Bay. Birds seemed scarce in the gardens and we didn't find the Kentucky Warbler that had been reported. We had a great close-up view of an adult Yellow-crowned Night Heron perched in tree near the path in the North Garden. There was a variety of shorebirds on the the marshes including Semi-palmated Sandpipers, and an unusually large number of Oystercatchers - 42 in one group. The West Pond had Greater Scaup, Red-breasted Merganser, Ruddy Duck, Green-winged Teal, Gadwall, Glossy Ibis, a Greater Yellowlegs and Marc spotted a Little Blue Heron.

We finished birding at the Big Johns Pond on the East side of the sanctuary where we saw many Forster's Terns, Mute Swans, Tree and Barn Swallows and the only Ring-billed Gull of the day.

A total of 126 species and a great good time.

*--Ralph Odell*

### **Garrison Gumshoes**

*Arthur Berland, Lew Kingsley (captain), Ian Kingsley, Bonnie and Gary Van Asselt, Pete Salmonsohn*

2:30 am, Saturday June 14th. I tossed my alarm across the room. What was I thinking? I'm getting too old for this.

Upstairs, I could hear my hosts, Bonnie and Gary Van Asselt, sluggishly moving about. I laid in bed for a few moments; thoughts of past birdathons -- precious moments and friendships -- gave me the inspiration to get out of bed at this absurd hour.

As I started getting dressed, those initial thoughts, when the alarm went off, began creeping back into my mind. I shook them off and got ready for another years' adventure.

Bonnie soon came down the stairs, followed by Gary, eyes half open. I soon remembered why I get so excited each year when birdathon time approaches -- good friends sharing their favorite pastime, and raising money to boot.

It was a cool, crisp morning, or night, or whatever. Not a sane creature was stirring. We, of course, were stirring, as we began packing the car.

Now heading down the road, we arrived at the home of our captain, Lew Kingsley, and his son Ian, who were waiting outside for us. The Garrison Gumshoes were together again and on the move. The five of us squeezed into one car and headed toward Bashakill Marsh, our first stop. I remembered there being more room in the back seat in past years. I guess they must be making cars narrower these days.

We arrived at the Marsh around 4:15 am. and were greeted by a cacophony of various frogs, but no birds. Within 15 minutes a Whip-poor-will was heard, followed by the distant hoots of a Great Horned Owl, coming from the opposite side of the marsh. Then the common early birds began adding their voices: Robins, Red-winged Blackbirds, Brown-headed Cowbirds, Catbirds, Yellow Warblers, Swamp Sparrows, Warbling Vireos and a distant Veery. Gary detected the secretive American Bittern

calling from afar, or so it seemed. The rest of us were struggling to pick out its song. Suddenly, it must have turned towards us, as all heard its pumping voice quite clearly. Now the marsh was finally waking up. Game on!

As we walked along the edge of the marsh, it soon became clear that most of the breeding birds had arrived, but just a few of the migrants were present. Louisiana Waterthrush, Ovenbird, Hooded, Chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, Cerulean and Blue-winged Warblers were seen and heard. As were a few migrants which included Cape May, Nashville, Wilson's and Canada Warblers. A single Marsh Wren rattled its song. Gary picked out a Willow Flycatcher singing from the opposite shore. On his way back to the parking lot to meet our sixth member, Pete Salmansohn, who heard a Sora singing from the marsh nearby.

At the boat launch across the marsh, the Pine Warbler was a big miss (a breeder here in years past) as this entire area was uncharacteristically unproductive.

Eastern Bluebird, Osprey, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Green Heron, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Raven and a pair of Bald Eagles on nest were seen at other locations throughout the marsh, but Prairie Warbler, at its usual location, was another big miss.

From Bashakill, we headed to Fir Brook near Forestburg. Though the rains came (and would continue for much of the day) we stopped at several spots along the road and were rewarded with Kestrel, Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks, and singing Golden-crowned Kinglet, Junco, Veery, breeding Blackburnian, Black-throated Green, Black and White, Worm-eating and Chestnut-sided Warblers. Other birds of note were singing Winter Wrens and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker.

While at Fir Brook, we were joined by Leah Horn and her young daughter, Riley.

We moved on to the Neversink Reservoir. It began raining much harder now, yet we were able to spot a few Bonaparte's Gulls. Then, after taking a short break to refuel and dry off, we landed at Morningside Park. This small lake surrounded by ball fields, basketball courts, picnic areas and a golf course, turned out to be surprisingly active, especially for the middle of the day. We picked up Killdeer, Least and Spotted Sandpiper and Belted Kingfisher here.

Passing through Ellenville on the way to Blue Chip Farms, Lew spotted a Broad-winged Hawk on a pole, and later, two Common Mergansers in a stream next to the road. We also added the elusive...pigeon! A good thing, because Blue Chip Farms was a big bust.

Shawangunk Grasslands National Wildlife Refuge was also a bit disappointing, perhaps because of the weather and the time of day, but it did produce several Eastern Meadowlarks, Indigo Buntings, Field Sparrows and lots and lots of Bobolinks.

Our last two locations, both owned by Scenic Hudson, Shaupeneak Ridge and Black Creek Preserve, had no new birds to offer on this day, though both had habitat that looks promising for future exploration.

It seemed to be a less productive birding day than expected, with few migrants present and no particular place that stood out. We did find a few new birds at almost every stop however and enjoyed the new places that we visited. In the end, we counted a total of 122 species. Not a bad total and a big surprise to me.

Another Birdathon in the books. I can't wait until next year for the Garrison Gumshoes' reunion.  
--Arthur Berland

### **Wappingers Creakers**

*Eric Lind (captain), Dylan Jeannotte, Betsy Carswell, Scott Silver, Joe Potyak*

Our long-time captain Steve Golladay stepped down this year, perhaps to finally write that novel he's been putting off for so many years. More likely though, he needed the day to create more of his exceptional bird photographs. So, Betsy Carswell, Dylan Jeannotte, Joe Potyak, Scott Silver and I set out with trepidation to explore the wilds of Dutchess and Putnam Counties. I had valiantly accepted the vacant captain's position, and prepared to lead with a firm but benevolent hand.

Well, not exactly. We did our best.

Starting at 5:00 am at the shaded and beautiful Pawling Nature Reserve, we were greeted by a Worm-eating Warbler singing from a low branch. A Blackburnian Warbler squeaked away, and was difficult to see atop the tallest trees. Black-throated Green Warblers whispered from the dark hemlocks and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker entertained us with his cat-like calls and good looks.

Onward to the Webatuck Craft Village to look for Common Mergansers and Osprey on the river. Neither were there, but watching Barn and Tree Swallows zip around the bridge was worth the stop. As we were packing up, a Belted Kingfisher screamed by, looking for a good fishing perch. Our next stop was the Nellie Hill Preserve to see the Prairie Warblers and Field Sparrows stake their claim to patches of the meadow. Indigo Buntings and Blue-winged Warblers filled our binocular lenses with color.

The woods of Deep Hollow were quiet, but Least Flycatchers, maybe uncomfortable with the silence, sang right on through. At the Millbrook School we picked up Eastern Towhees and Swamp Sparrow. As Dylan fondly reminisced about his days at the school, we also learned he played baseball with the royal son of the emperor of Japan. Imagine that.

Moving on to Thompson Pond, we saw squabbling Red-winged Blackbirds in the marsh and an Osprey fly overhead. And then on to Audubon's lovely Buttercup Farm. Bobolinks flew their jittery displays in the fields, Veerys sang

their languid songs from the woods and a flock of Cedar Waxwings socialized in an apple tree.

Our next stop was at Strevor Farm Road in Pine Plains. A shallow pond hosted Lesser Yellowlegs and Least Sandpipers, and behind us Eastern Meadowlarks brightened the fields and a Common Nighthawk surprised us all. We made a few other stops before we headed south, including the Institute of Ecosystem Studies and Cary Arboretum, along with a quick check for Purple Martins. Back in Putnam County we covered Breakneck Ridge, some favorite spots in Fahnestock State Park and Constitution Marsh, picking up

Marsh Wren and Bald Eagle. We then decided to head over to Doodletown, thinking it would be the best place to be at the end of the day. When we saw glowing Hooded Warblers in the fading light, we knew we were right.

Over the course of the day, we recorded 99 species of birds. All of the Creakers provided a wonderful blend of expertise and enthusiasm. Betsy also contributed the driving responsibilities and coolers full of snacks and water, and Joe was our dutiful recorder, keeping order of what we saw and when. Our thanks to all.

--Eric Lind

## Binoculars

After years of collecting articles to help decide on a new pair, Nancy P. Durr found a product review article by authority Ken Rosenberg in the Spring issue of *Living Bird* (a publication of Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology). It solved her quest for an all-around great product, the Vanquard Endeavor ED 10.5x45 -- high quality and affordable, with few limitations.



## The Crossley ID Guide (Eastern Birds)

The April issue of the N. Y. State Ornithological Association featured this book. Special features: 640 life-like scenes, 10,000 photographs, and the article called it "the first guide to portray all key identification characteristics: size, shape, behavior, probability, and color. The book is 3.6 pounds and 544 pages so it is not a carry-around pocket field guide. Check it out at [www.CrossleyBirds.com](http://www.CrossleyBirds.com) Around \$21 at Amazon; list is \$35.

Nancy P. Durr

Sunday, July 10, 5:30 p.m.

### CANOE TRIP at Constitution Marsh

Max Garfinkle, the Marty McGuire Audubon Scholarship recipient, will be leading this trip for PHAS members and friends. Reservations are required. Space is limited to 15 persons. Please call (845) 265-2601 x 15, or email [cmacs@audubon.org](mailto:cmacs@audubon.org) to make a reservation, or for more information. The cost for Audubon members, seniors and students is \$20; for non-members, \$25; and for children, \$15.

Saturday, August 27, 10 AM

### Discover Norrie: Beginning Birding!

With a pair of binoculars and a bird book, anyone can get started on this interesting and fun hobby. Learn the basics of bird watching using your own binoculars or borrow a pair of ours. Meet at the environmental center. Free. Family-friendly. No registration required. Norrie Point Environmental Center, Staatsburg

Thursday, July 21, Hubbard Lodge, 9:00 AM - lunch

**Audubon in the Parks** press event, birdwalk and more! More information elsewhere in this newsletter.

### Board Meetings

Tuesday, July 27, 6:30 PM

Hubbard Lodge, Rte 9, Cold Spring

Tuesday, September 13, 6:30 PM

Hubbard Lodge, Rte 9, Cold Spring

All members welcome.

# Audubon in the Parks

## *A unique partnership engaging people in nature to enhance bird conservation in New York State Parks*

*Audubon in the Parks* is an initiative with Audubon New York and the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and its various Regional Commissions, as well as Audubon Chapters and Friends Groups, to advance bird conservation in State Parks, specifically targeting Bird Conservation Areas (BCAs) and Important Bird Areas (IBAs). By joining forces to reach common goals, *Audubon in the Parks* will utilize the collective strengths of both OPRHP and Audubon to have a greater impact on bird conservation across the state through outreach, interpretation, and habitat enhancement efforts.

This partnership approach to bird conservation will further our goals in ways that neither organization could accomplish alone. In these difficult fiscal times with limited budgets and scarce resources, public/private partnerships such as *Audubon in the Parks* are key to advancing conservation and building strong relationships that will have a lasting impact on the health and vitality of our State Parks system. In addition, by maintaining and enhancing New York's priority birds and habitats, *Audubon in the Parks* will also help the State and municipalities to capitalize on the expanding bird watching tourism industry; the fastest growing form of outdoor recreation in the State, generating billions of dollars each year in much needed tourism revenue.

The *Audubon in the Parks* initiative will focus on restoring and enhancing habitat at BCAs and IBAs, as well as other State Parks that are important for bird conservation. The BCA Program was established in 1997 to safeguard and enhance bird populations and their habitats on State lands and waters. The goal of the BCA Program is to integrate bird conservation interests into agency planning, management and research projects, within the context of agency missions, and is modeled after Audubon's IBA Program. At BCAs, activities will focus on implementing the recommendations in the BCA Management Guidance Summaries that have been developed to address the specific actions needed at those sites.

A working group consisting of OPRHP representatives and Audubon New York staff will guide and

coordinate the initiative. Audubon will facilitate activities conducted by its Chapters, Centers, staff and volunteers. *Audubon in the Parks* activities will range from leading bird walks, and entering data collected as a result, into eBird (eBird.org) to track bird usage over time, to more involved efforts such as habitat restoration projects. Depending on the specific activity and location, Audubon New York staff, regional OPRHP staff, Audubon Chapters, and Friends groups will implement the activities. Examples of projects currently contributing to this initiative include the following:

### **Joseph Davis State Park (IBA and BCA)**

Audubon New York, OPRHP, and the Buffalo Audubon Society (BAS) are working to evaluate and improve avian habitat and interpretation at Joseph Davis State Park. This project implements activities identified in the goals of the Niagara River IBA Plan, the Joseph Davis BCA Management Guidance Summary, and the Joseph Davis State Park Master Plan and the Niagara River Greenway Plan. This project will enhance and protect critical bird habitat along the upper Niagara River Corridor, restore sensitive bird habitat to attract migratory bird populations, and also improve public enjoyment of this important resource. This project is currently in the planning phase with implementation expected to begin in 2012.

### **Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park (IBA and BCA)**

The Putnam Highlands Audubon Society (PHAS) conducts field trips and Christmas Bird Counts within Fahnestock State Park. Data collected from these efforts contributed to the creation of a bird checklist for the State Park. PHAS also participated in the Park's master planning process by reviewing and providing recommendations to OPRHP on the draft master plan. Key actions for future work include collaborating with Friends of Fahnestock and Hudson Highlands State Parks (FOFHH) to install and monitor American Kestrel nest boxes, a declining species in New York, and remove invasive plants to enhance habitat for priority birds. Other possible collaborations between OPRHP, PHAS and FOFHH include habitat management and restoration projects within the Park's IBAs and BCAs.

--continued on next page

### Connetquot River State Park (IBA)

The Great South Bay Audubon Society has been active in Connetquot River State Park for a number of years as part of their IBA adoption. In addition to continuing to co-host a birding and breakfast event with the Friends of Connetquot River State Park, the Chapter would like to work with OPRHP to remove invasive plants and replace them with native species that benefit priority bird species, including Northern Bobwhite. Working with Audubon New York, the Chapter is also interested in supporting the Piping Plover stewardship and monitoring efforts at Gilgo State Park by hiring a seasonal technician to conduct the stewardship work.

With 27 Audubon Chapters, Audubon New York staff and centers, and 213 State Parks and Historic Sites located across the state, this initiative is well positioned to have a strong impact on New York's priority birds and habitats. To date, 19 State Parks, approximately a third of which are BCAs, have been identified on which to focus immediate attention through *Audubon in the Parks*. An additional 10 State Parks have been identified as potential sites for expansion in the coming year. Audubon and State Parks have a strong history of working collaboratively and this initiative builds on that strength to identify new opportunities to further bird conservation at State Parks.

To introduce the **Audubon in the Parks** initiative, New York State Parks and Audubon New York will be hosting a press event at the Hubbard Lodge on Thursday, July 21, 2011. The event will begin with a birdwalk at 9:00 a.m. lead by Rich Anderson, past president of PHAS. Following the birdwalk, representatives from State Parks and Audubon NY will address the media and guests. The initiative will be "kicked-off" with a volunteer work party to remove invasive plants from the Ann Odell Butterfly Garden at the Hubbard Lodge from 10:30 - 11:30 a.m. A light lunch will be provided afterward to close the event.

Members and friends of Putnam Highlands Audubon Society are invited and encouraged to attend this event. If you are interested in helping out, please contact Rich Anderson to RSVP, or for more information. Rich can be reached at (845) 265-2601, or by e-mail at: [randerson@audubon.org](mailto:randerson@audubon.org).



*Ann Odell  
Butterfly Garden  
at Hubbard Lodge*

## BILL PROPOSED TO END TAX-EXEMPTION ON NONPROFIT ACRES

by Adele Stern

**We are urging that Audubon members contact Assembly Members regarding a bill that would remove the tax exemption on nonprofit organizations with undeveloped property.** The Senate bill S2544 passed the Senate very quickly (2 weeks) and has an Assembly companion bill A6057.

In a nutshell, the bill would impose a tax on unimproved acreage held by a nonprofit. It would establish a stricter standard for obtaining tax exempt status and reduce the traditional support that government has provided nonprofit organizations. It overlooks the fact that organizations such as children's camps and Audubon would need to use resources to pay taxes rather than to advance goals at the core of a nonprofit's mission. One could argue that we use property for hiking, nature education, habitat and other acceptable nonprofit purposes, but we have no idea whether that argument would work. PHAS has in its care property that was donated for the sole purpose of preservation, maintaining habitat, and establishing and maintaining trails for education and well as enjoyment.

It is important that we contact our Assembly Members to prevent nonprofits such as camps, National Audubon and local Audubon chapters and other nature programs from being taxed for undeveloped land. Needless to say, the result would be detrimental to many educational programs and especially children who benefit from these programs.

The author of the Bill is Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther of Middletown (845) 342-9304. Assemblywoman Sandra Galef (845) 941-1111 is Chair of the Assembly Real Estate Taxation Committee and has expressed support in the past for taxing nonprofit land. I spoke with her office on June 20th, and she had expressed a desire to rethink the bill which has been bogged down in Committee and is unlikely to come up for legislative vote before the session ends for the summer.

Connie Mayer-Bakall, Vice President of the Putnam Highlands Audubon Society, has contacted ANY's Legislative Director, Sean Mahar. He indicated he will be working on the bill at the end of the current session and will keep us posted of the details of Audubon's opposition. Although the proposed bill will not come up until after this session, phone calls to Assemblywoman Sandra Galef would be most appreciated.

## Feeder Maintenance & Hygiene from [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

Cleaning birdfeeders and birdbaths is a crucial practice in preventing the spread of disease between birds.

Recently, scientists noted that the spread of Trichomonad protozoan parasites, which cause a disease termed Trichomoniasis, was on the rise especially among mourning dove and band-tailed pigeon populations in the West.

You can tell if you have a disease problem at your feeders because diseased birds are less alert and less active, they feed less and may cower on a feeder, they may be reluctant to fly, and their feathers do not appear to be in good shape. Birds afflicted with Trichomoniasis typically develop sores in their mouths and throats. Unable to swallow, they drop food or water contaminated with Trichomonads that other birds then consume, thus spreading the disease.

With the concern over this and other diseases, including Salmonellosis, Aspergillosis, and Avian Pox, which are easily transmitted at birdfeeders and birdbaths, Audubon recommends paying diligent attention to cleanliness in pursuit of responsible and rewarding bird feeding practices. Birds with disease

are more likely to die from starvation, dehydration, predation, and severe weather, so protect them by following these tips.

- **Disinfect your feeder and birdbath:** To keep pathogens at bay, immerse your seed feeder or birdbath in a nine to one water-bleach solution, rinsing it thoroughly, one to two times per month (for tips on cleaning hummingbird feeders. In the presence of outbreaks, disinfect twice as often.
- **Empty water from your birdbath every day:** Brush or wipe it clean and rinse, then refill the birdbath with fresh water.
- **Discard old seed and hulls:** When you clean your feeder, get rid of the old seed. Rake or sweep up any uneaten hulls on the ground. The disease-causing Trichomonad protozoan, for example, can live for up to five days in food and several hours in water.
- **Avoid overcrowding:** If possible, provide more than one feeder and spread them out. Crowding only expedites the spread of disease, so give the birds variety and plenty of room.



©Dan North

## BLACK VULTURES

Picking July blueberries in a high meadow, I happen to look up at just the right moment. Overhead pass three large black birds. They look like big crows with long necks. I know they aren't turkey vultures – they're too small and they're doing too much flapping. Also, when gliding, their wings are flatter than the familiar V-shape of the turkey vulture. It crosses my mind that these might be black vultures, birds I've never seen before. But all that wing action seems inconsistent with being a vulture. I open my Peterson Guide at black vulture and bingo: "Note the quick labored flapping." The larger turkey vulture, Peterson adds, "flaps wings less, soars more." At home, I open my "Sibley Guide to Bird Life and Behavior." Bingo again. The three vultures I saw were flying high at mid-day. Black vultures, Sibley says, have an unfavorable wing area-to-bodyweight ratio and thus take to the air late in the morning, waiting for thermals to develop. While turkey vultures fly relatively low and locate carrion by smell, groups of gregarious black vultures fly higher and locate their next meal by sight – often the sight of feeding turkey vultures. Once again, bird books have given me that comforting feeling of reliable permanence I get when their descriptions match what I've seen. Cat-tails and hemlocks may be disappearing. Supermarket tomatoes no longer resemble the real item. Constitutional rights like habeas corpus apparently aren't written in stone. And human activity threatens bird diversity in multiple ways. But if Peterson says the wood thrush sings a flutelike ee-o-lay, you can bet the farm that the ee-o-lay you just heard comes from a thrush with a rusty head. The nation and its wildlife may be on shaky ground, but at least on the level of Peterson, there's still a small measure of order left in the universe.

## GET IT YOUR WAY!

As a Putnam Highland Audubon Society (PHAS) member or donor of at least \$25, **you are entitled to our free, bimonthly newsletter.**

We now **offer you a choice** of how to receive the newsletter. Please respond so we can provide it in the way you choose. We'll avoid the cost of mailing it to those who prefer an email version or don't want the newsletter at all. The funds saved can be used for other worthy conservation activities.

### *Please check all that apply:*

- Send me the free color newsletter via email. \*  
(Provide email address below.)
- Mail me the free black/white, print newsletter. (Even those with computer access may now select this option.)
- No need to send me the newsletter either way.

### *Please print:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

(Check the appropriate box or boxes above.)

If you already get our newsletter via email you need not respond to this unless you want to change your previous "vote."

**\*We will not sell, rent or share your email address, and you can opt out from receiving future emailings at any time. Those selecting email delivery of the bimonthly newsletter will also receive brief PHAS notices, averaging no more than two per month.**

### THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING TODAY

Email [newsletter@putnamhighlandsaudubon.org](mailto:newsletter@putnamhighlandsaudubon.org)  
Mail PHAS, PO Box 292, Cold Spring, NY 10516  
Call (845)265-2577

## Update from Constitution Marsh

*"What we're doing today is so much better than video games!"* said a 4<sup>th</sup> grade Beacon student during a canoe and brook studies field trip at the Marsh. This is the sort of remark that all of us at the Marsh strive to hear.

Spring at the Marsh was bursting with activity and nothing less than a learning experience for both me and the groups who visited us. We had the pleasure to fill almost every suitable high tide day for the last few months with schools from the region wanting to enjoy the beauty and natural history of the Marsh, to get their hands wet in the Brook or simply take a walk on the trails. Not only were we been busy with all of the new and seasoned visitors to the Marsh, we were also been engaged in bird banding, birdathons and an eel studies program.

As summer has now arrived, it too is crammed with programs and projects. The Marsh has welcomed a Student Conservation Association intern, Sara O'Shea. Sara recently graduated from Delaware Valley College in Pennsylvania, receiving her BS in Conservation and Wildlife. Sara will be working at the Marsh for the next five months, helping us with the daily operations of the Marsh and also with the education programs. Extending from SCA and Sarah's internship, we have also received an SCA spring project that will include approximately 30 SCA interns from around the region. They will be camping at the Marsh for 3 nights at the end of June, working with us in fragmite control and will be engaged in educational workshops.

Aside from the educational programs and public canoe trips, we will also be hosting High School interns from the Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment in NYC in July. They will be staying with us for a week and a half, helping us with projects and participating in workshops.

I am happy to announce that I will be helping the Putnam Highlands Audubon Society to restart the Audubon Adventures this year. Outreach will begin soon and my hope is that I can recruit new teachers to the curriculum. If you know of any interested parties, please have them contact me.

With all of the fascinating summer programs and projects that the Marsh offers, we hope to convince many more visitors to feel what the Beacon 4<sup>th</sup> grader so wonderfully expressed.



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# Birdathon 2011 Sightings

A: Long Island & NYC (Putnam Valley Bogtrotters); B: Orange, Sullivan & Ulster (Garrison Gumshoes);

C: Putnam, Dutchess & Doodletown (Wappingers Creakers)

	A	B	C		A	B	C		A	B	C
Brant	✓			Bonaparte's Gull		✓		European Starling	✓	✓	✓
Canada Goose	✓	✓	✓	Ring-billed Gull	✓	✓	✓	Cedar Waxwing		✓	✓
Mute Swan	✓		✓	Herring Gull	✓	✓		Blue-winged Warbler		✓	✓
Wood Duck	✓	✓	✓	Great Black-backed Gull	✓			Tennessee Warbler	✓		✓
Gadwall	✓			Least Tern	✓			Nashville Warbler	✓	✓	
American Black Duck	✓		✓	Roseate Tern	✓			Northern Parula	✓		
Mallard	✓	✓	✓	Common Tern	✓			Yellow Warbler	✓	✓	✓
Green-winged Teal	✓			Forster's Tern	✓			Chestnut-sided Warbler	✓	✓	✓
Greater Scaup	✓			Black Skimmer	✓			Magnolia Warbler	✓	✓	✓
Common Eider	✓			Rock Pigeon	✓	✓	✓	Cape May Warbler	✓	✓	
Surf Scoter	✓			Mourning Dove	✓	✓	✓	Black-throated Blue Warbler	✓		
Bufflehead	✓			Yellow-billed Cuckoo		✓	✓	Yellow-rumped Warbler	✓	✓	
Common Merganser			✓	Eastern Screech Owl			✓	Black-throated Green Warbler	✓	✓	✓
Red-breasted Merganser	✓			Great Horned Owl		✓		Blackburnian Warbler		✓	✓
Ruddy Duck	✓			Common Nighthawk			✓	Yellow-throated Warbler	✓		
Ring-necked Pheasant		✓	✓	Whip-poor-will		✓		Prairie Warbler	✓		✓
Wild Turkey		✓	✓	Chimney Swift		✓	✓	Blackpoll Warbler	✓	✓	
Common Loon	✓			Ruby-throated Hummingbird	✓	✓	✓	Cerulean Warbler		✓	✓
Pied-billed Grebe			✓	Belted Kingfisher		✓	✓	Black-and-white Warbler	✓	✓	✓
Northern Gannet	✓			Red-bellied Woodpecker	✓	✓	✓	American Redstart	✓	✓	✓
Double-crested Cormorant	✓	✓		Yellow-bellied Sapsucker		✓	✓	Worm-eating Warbler		✓	✓
American Bittern			✓	Downy Woodpecker	✓	✓	✓	Ovenbird	✓	✓	✓
Great Blue Heron	✓	✓	✓	Hairy Woodpecker		✓	✓	Northern Waterthrush	✓	✓	
Great Egret	✓			Northern Flicker	✓	✓	✓	Louisiana Waterthrush		✓	✓
Snowy Egret	✓			Pileated Woodpecker		✓	✓	Common Yellowthroat	✓	✓	✓
Little Blue Heron	✓			Eastern Wood-Pewee		✓	✓	Hooded Warbler		✓	✓
Green Heron		✓		Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	✓			Wilson's Warbler	✓	✓	
Black-crowned Night Heron	✓			Willow Flycatcher	✓	✓	✓	Canada Warbler	✓	✓	✓
Yellow-crowned Night Heron	✓		✓	Least Flycatcher		✓	✓	Scarlet Tanager	✓	✓	✓
Glossy Ibis	✓			Eastern Phoebe	✓	✓	✓	Eastern Towhee	✓	✓	✓
Black Vulture		✓	✓	Great Crested Flycatcher	✓	✓	✓	Chipping Sparrow	✓	✓	✓
Turkey Vulture		✓	✓	Eastern Kingbird	✓	✓	✓	Field Sparrow		✓	✓
Osprey	✓	✓	✓	White-eyed Vireo	✓			Vesper Sparrow		✓	
Bald Eagle		✓	✓	Yellow-throated Vireo	✓	✓	✓	Savannah Sparrow		✓	
Northern Harrier	✓			Blue-headed Vireo	✓	✓	✓	Song Sparrow	✓	✓	✓
Cooper's Hawk		✓	✓	Warbling Vireo	✓	✓	✓	Swamp Sparrow	✓	✓	✓
Red-shouldered Hawk		✓		Red-eyed Vireo	✓	✓	✓	White-throated Sparrow	✓	✓	
Broad-winged Hawk	✓	✓	✓	Blue Jay	✓	✓	✓	Dark-eyed Junco		✓	
Red-tailed Hawk	✓	✓	✓	American Crow	✓	✓	✓	Northern Cardinal	✓	✓	✓
American Kestrel		✓		Fish Crow	✓	✓	✓	Rose-breasted Grosbeak	✓	✓	✓
Merlin	✓			Common Raven		✓	✓	Indigo Bunting	✓		✓
Clapper Rail	✓			Horned Lark	✓			Bobolink		✓	✓
Virginia Rail		✓		Tree Swallow	✓	✓	✓	Red-winged Blackbird	✓	✓	✓
Sora		✓		Northern Rough-winged Swallow		✓	✓	Eastern Meadowlark		✓	✓
Common Moorhen		✓		Bank Swallow			✓	Common Grackle	✓	✓	✓
Black-bellied Plover	✓			Barn Swallow	✓	✓	✓	Boat-tailed Grackle	✓		
Semipalmated Plover	✓			Black-capped Chickadee	✓	✓	✓	Brown-headed Cowbird	✓	✓	✓
Piping Plover	✓			Tufted Titmouse	✓	✓	✓	Orchard Oriole	✓		✓
Killdeer	✓	✓		White-breasted Nuthatch	✓	✓	✓	Baltimore Oriole (Northern)	✓	✓	✓
American Oystercatcher	✓			Carolina Wren	✓	✓	✓	House Finch	✓	✓	✓
Spotted Sandpiper		✓	✓	House Wren	✓	✓		American Goldfinch	✓	✓	✓
Greater Yellowlegs	✓			Winter Wren		✓		House Sparrow	✓	✓	✓
Willet	✓			Marsh Wren	✓	✓	✓				
Lesser Yellowlegs			✓	Golden-crowned kinglet		✓		Team Totals	126	122	99
Ruddy Turnstone	✓			Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	✓	✓	✓				
Red Knot	✓			Eastern Bluebird		✓	✓				
Sanderling	✓			Veery	✓	✓	✓				
Semipalmated Sandpiper	✓			Swainson's Thrush		✓					
Least Sandpiper	✓	✓	✓	Wood Thrush		✓	✓				
Purple Sandpiper	✓			American Robin	✓	✓	✓				
Dunlin	✓			Gray Catbird	✓	✓	✓				
Short-billed Dowitcher	✓			Northern Mockingbird	✓	✓					
Laughing Gull	✓			Brown Thrasher	✓						

**Grand Total Reported: 178**

11-year range: 180-203

**Contributors to Birdathon 2011**  
**Our thanks for the generosity and commitment of all.**  
**\$10,387.60 was contributed by 96 donors!**

**Eagle (\$1000-1999)**

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**Birdathoners 2011**

**Garrison Gumshoes**

Arthur Berland  
 Ian Kingsley  
 Lew Kingsley (Captain)  
 Pete Salmonsohn  
 Bonnie Van Asselt  
 Gary Van Asselt  
 Leah & Riley Horn

**Putnam Valley Bogtrotters**

Jane Alexander  
 Rich Anderson  
 Marc Breslav (Birdathon  
 Coordinator)  
 Ralph Odell (Captain)  
 Arlene Seymour

**Wappingers Creakers**

Betsy Carswell  
 Dylan Jeannotte  
 Eric Lind (Captain)  
 Joe Potyak  
 Scott Silver

## Connecting People with Nature

The mission of the Putnam Highlands Audubon Society is to preserve and maintain those lands and waters that have been entrusted to our stewardship; to inform and educate the public on issues involving birds, wildlife, and the environment; and to encourage membership in the chapter and participation in its activities.

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Dan North has very generously donated copies of his book of essays, **The Slow Walker**, to be sold at locations in the area. Proceeds will go to the Marty McGuire Audubon Scholarship Fund. B and L Deli, Route 9, Cold Spring, MountainTops Outfitters at 144 Main Street, Beacon and Country Goose, Main Street, Cold Spring are among those selling the book. Bob Carpino and Loren Centrello (pictured above) at B and L Deli have sold 20 copies of the book to date. They take no percentage of the sales which translates to \$160.00 for the scholarship fund. **Thanks Bob and Loren, and thanks Dan!**

Putnam Highlands Audubon Society  
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