

Meadowlark

The Newsletter of Genesee Valley Audubon Society
March-April 2016 Vol. 43, No. 4

President's Column by June Summers, President of GVAS

Birds and an Election Year

Only eight more months until the campaigns are over. As Audubon members we think more about the environment and how the candidates and their actions will affect it than the general public. The February issue of *Bird Watching* contained an article, "Birds on Our Radar," in which renowned ornithologists and conservationists were interviewed on five issues – climate change, cats, budget cuts, wind power, and habitat loss.

Climate Change

In the fall of 2014, the National Audubon Society identified 314 North American bird species that are at risk from climate change. More than half, 188 species, will lose over half of their current range by 2080, and the remaining 126 species, called climate-endangered, will lose more than half their current range even sooner – by 2050.

One climate-related event that can't be ignored is the four-year long drought in California and neighboring states. "It is already taking a toll on birds," said Brigid McCormack, executive director of Audubon California. In some areas some species populations have fallen below the numbers needed to successfully breed.

John Fitzpatrick, director of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, pointed out problems that long distance migrants, such as shorebirds, face due to climate change. Melting arctic ice will lead to sea-level rise, causing the loss of biologically rich coastal wetlands that these birds depend on for winter and stopover habitat.

As unpopular as nuclear power is, it might be an interim step to reducing greenhouse gases while we continue to work on renewable energy.

Outdoor Cats

Studies show that cats are by far a leading cause of death of resident and migrant birds, killing 1.4-3.7 billion in the United States and 200 million in Canada each year. Birds are not their only victims; meadow voles, frogs and lizards are also killed.

Cats can't tell the difference between endangered species and an unprotected starling. I have found an endangered Cerulean Warbler killed by the neighbor's cat in their front yard. Jim Stevenson, founder of the Galveston Ornithological Society, was dubbed, "the most notorious cat killer in America," in 2007 by the *New York Times* when he killed a feral cat that was hunting a Piping Plover.

In the last several decades cat lovers have decided to start feeding colonies of feral cats. Then the trap-neuter-release (return) (TNR) programs started. In these programs well-intentioned cat lovers trap feral cats, have them neutered, and return them to their original location. The intention is to reduce the population of cats in that location. In large colonies such as the one in Batavia, it is statistically impossible to keep the population under control. All you have to do is miss one female and she is off and reproducing several litters a year. For an unbiased look at this subject see this PBS Newshour piece: <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/why-activists-are-fighting-over-feral->

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Programs

MARCH PROGRAM

Berries and Backyards: How Braddock Bay Bird Observatory is Saving Birds

Tuesday, Mar. 22, 2016, 7:30 p.m.

**Brighton Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room
2300 Elmwood Ave., Brighton**

People have been marking birds to track their movements and understand their behavior since at least 1763. John James Audubon was the first to mark birds in the United States, when he tied silver cords to the legs of nesting Phoebes in 1803. Braddock Bay Bird Observatory (BBBO) has been banding birds for nearly 35 years, and in that time they've helped uncover some amazing migration stories. From research spanning the amazing 86-hour nonstop flight of the Blackpoll Warbler to avian "superfruits," work done at BBBO has given us insight into birds' migratory journeys.

Andrea Patterson of Braddock Bay Bird Observatory will tell us some of these amazing migration stories, and about how work done at the observatory helps ensure birds' continued survival in a world increasingly inhospitable to them.

APRIL PROGRAM

Emerald Ash Borer, Why Should You Care?

Tuesday, April 26, 2016, 7:30 p.m.

**Brighton Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room
2300 Elmwood Ave., Brighton**

Emerald Ash Borers were first found in the Rochester area in 2010. They were found in southeast Chili near Scottsville Rd. and the Thruway. Since then they have spread N, E, S, and W. Now as we go into our sixth year of infestation what should we expect: is it going to continue to spread slowly or it going to start to spread more quickly? What is going to happen when all the ash trees die? How is it going to affect the environment and how will it affect the value of your home? Should you keep your ash trees by treating them with pesticides, have them removed, or leave them? Join us to learn the answers to these questions and more.

This presentation is sponsored by the Monroe County Emerald Ash Borer Task Force. Garret Koplen, Forester with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, will give this presentation with GVAS President, June Summers.

THE MESSENGER

Thursday, April 28, 2016, 6:30 p.m.

Cinemark Movies 10, 2613 West Henrietta Road, Rochester, NY.

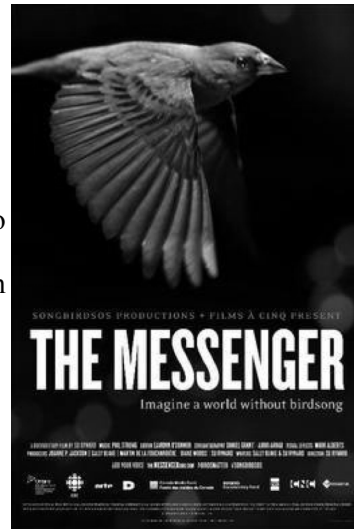
Join GVAS for this astounding documentary. THE MESSENGER explores our deep-rooted connection to birds and warns of the uncertain fate of

songbirds that might mirror our own. Moving from the northern reaches of the Boreal Forest to the base of Mount Ararat in Turkey to the streets of New York, THE MESSENGER brings us face-to-face with a remarkable variety of

human-made perils that have devastated thrushes, warblers, orioles, tanagers, grosbeaks and many other airborne music-makers.

THE MESSENGER is an engaging, visually stunning, three-act emotional journey, one that mixes its elegiac message with hopeful notes and unique glances into the influence of songbirds on our own expressions of the soul. The other part of THE MESSENGER's story is about the mass depletion of songbirds on multiple continents, and about those who are working to turn the tide.

GVAS partnered with Braddock Bay Raptor Research to book a screening of this wonderful film for Thursday, April 28, 2016 at 6:30 p.m. at Cinemark Movies 10, 2613 West Henrietta Road, Rochester, NY. Tickets are \$9.00. We booked the screening in April to celebrate spring migration and to give you a chance to work it into your plans. We won't be able to have the screening unless we sell 75 tickets before April 21. To view the trailers go to <http://songbirdsos.com/portfolio/official-film-trailer/> and to purchase tickets go to <https://www.tugg.com/events/79835>.



Field Trips

Mt Hope Cemetery, May 15, 8:00 a.m.

Join us at the North Gate of Mt. Hope Cemetery for birding and history as we stroll through the older section of the historic cemetery for two hours. The large old trees and bushes along the hillsides are very attractive to migrating birds. Bring your binoculars and \$7 for the tour fee to Mt. Hope Cemetery.

The North Gate is located on Mt. Hope Ave. across from Robinson Rd., which runs through Highland Park. (This is NOT the gate that is across from The Distillery.) No advance sign-up is needed. Call June at (585) 865-6047, by Saturday evening, May 14, if you have questions or for directions.

Braddock Bay Raptor Research Bird of Prey Days, April 22-24

This year is Braddock

Bay Raptor

Research's 30th

Anniversary so it will

be a special Bird of

Prey Days. The

featured species this year is the Bald Eagle. There will be a festival tent with optics vendors where you can try out binoculars and scopes.

Join BBRR for one of the morning owl prowls to see your first Saw-whet Owl; check the web site for dates and times.

GVAS will have a table there so stop and visit us. Check out the full schedule of events at <http://www.bbrr.org/>.



PEREGRINE FALCONS

It is spring and love is in the air. Our downtown

Peregrine Falcons

will start to think

of courtship and

mating, which

leads to eggs and

baby falcons and

fledging. Beauty

and Dot.ca both

spent the winter in

Rochester, usually in sight of each other,

often sharing a ledge.

You can follow their activities on Rfalconcam.com. Five cameras show you the nest box on top of the Times Square Building. The blogs Falconwatch and Imprints will tell you the latest happenings in the falcon world. You can join the Forum and chat with other falcon lovers. You can even buy a T-shirt, coffee cup, or mousepad with a falcon design. Share our love for the fastest animals on the planet.



Meadowlark Opt-Out/Go Green

If you would like to Go Green and reduce the amount of mail you receive, send GVAS an email to gvaudubon@gmail.com. Put Opt-Out in the subject line, include your name, nine digit zip code and email. If you don't have email call June at 585-865-6047, leave the above information, and phone number.

Follow Genesee Valley Audubon Society on Facebook for program and field trip reminders and much more.

In recent years, bills have been introduced to permit cat colonies in some states. Fortunately in October of 2015, Governor Andrew Cuomo vetoed a bill that would have used public funds to support statewide trap-neuter-release programs for feral cats.

Attacks on Conservation

In New York we are fortunate to have a coalition of environmental groups that have lobbied for years to keep environmental funds growing; the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) has been our focus. Through the EPF New York conserves and enhances farms, forests, rivers, beaches, and lakes. The EPF supports community parks, recycling and other solid waste reduction programs, and zoos and botanical gardens. EPF programs improve the quality of life for all New Yorkers, attracting businesses, creating jobs and protecting our water, air, and natural heritage.

In 2008 the EPF was reduced from \$255M to \$134M reducing its effectiveness. By fiscal year 2014/2015 the We Love New York coalition had gotten the EPF increased to \$157M. In January Governor is doubling the fund level. The We Love New York coalition is urging the Governor to keep his commitment.

For the past few years, Governor Paul LePage of Maine has held up \$11.5M in conservation bonds, ostensibly due to a fight with the legislature over timber-harvest revenue.

Wind Turbines

Wind turbines will be part of the answer to renewable energy. "But wind power," as William Mueller of the Western Great Lakes Bird and Bat Observatory says, "has to be done carefully and correctly." In Michigan, Ohio, and Maine wind turbines are not subject to review before they are built. In New York State we are fortunate enough to have SEQR Review and Article 10. The Lighthouse Wind project that

would straddle the Orleans–Niagara County line along the shore of Lake Ontario is undergoing Article 10 review. The south shore of Lake Ontario is an important migratory corridor; putting any wind farm there would be a bad move for birds.

Threats to Habitat

"The places we thought were protected are not," said Kim Kaufman of the Black Swamp Bird Observatory in Ohio. This statement struck me as particularly poignant. Here in Monroe County the Parks Department turns forest into soccer fields. Every large stand of forest counts.

"Even a federal Wilderness Act designation – the highest level of conservation protection for federal lands – does not deter plans to alter wildlife habitat," says Nils Warnock, executive director of Audubon Alaska. State leaders have pushed for construction of a road through Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, on the Alaskan Peninsula. Audubon Alaska, the Sierra Club and other conservation organizations oppose the road based on the fact that it is an important stopover and winter area for Emperor Geese, Steller's Eider and others. While the Interior Department rejected the road in 2013 and a federal judge upheld it in 2015, there is a bill in the Senate to push the road through.

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge is the only refuge with a major highway running through it. When the Thruway was built area birders such as Alan Klonik fought to have it moved farther north to no avail.

In summary, we need to be aware of the candidates' views on turning climate change around and whether they back conservation legislation such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund. You can play an important part in protecting our environment by who you elect, so make your choice wisely.

The Basics of Birding Course

Dates: Tuesday, April 26 7:00-9:00 p.m. Greece Town Hall
Thursday, May 5 7:00-9:00 p.m. Greece Town Hall
Saturday, May 7 7:00 a.m. - Noon Field Trip
Instructor: Brett M. Ewald - Lakeshore Nature Tours



Western New York is one of the top regions in the country for birdwatching, hosting an incredible diversity of breeding and migrant species. This in-depth class will help you identify and appreciate the many species of birds, through the use of slides, hands-on equipment, and field trips.

The two evening classes will focus on introducing many aspects of birding, including identification skills, seasonal occurrence, and regional hotspots. We will also discuss backyard birdwatching through the use of feeders and birdhouses, and compare some of the tools of the trade - binoculars, spotting scopes, and field guides - and show how to take care of them.

The field trip will provide an opportunity to observe and learn about a wide variety of species at local habitats. It is timed to capture the phenomenon of spring migration, and will focus on encountering a number of waterfowl, raptor, and songbird species (warblers, vireos, thrushes, flycatchers, sparrows, woodpeckers, and more), emphasizing identification through field marks and song.

Your instructor is a naturalist and biologist with over 30 years of birding experience, much of it in Western New York. He has been involved in numerous research and educational projects, specializing in bird migration and distribution patterns. He is the former Director of the Hamlin Beach Lakewatch and co-authored a publication on waterbird movements on Lake Ontario. He currently operates Lakeshore Nature Tours and leads trips throughout North America.

Registration Form

The Basics of Birding Course

Name _____ Phone Number _____
Address _____ Email _____

Basics of Birding Course

Number of students (GVAS members) _____ x \$35 each = \$ _____

Number of students (non-GVAS members) _____ x \$40 each = \$ _____

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: **Genesee Valley Audubon Society**

Questions? Call June Summers, 585-865-6047.

Please mail registration form & check to:

JUNE SUMMERS

208 RHEA CRESCENT

ROCHESTER, NY 14615

Genesee Valley Audubon Society Meadowlark

P.O. Box 15512, Rochester, NY 14615-0512

GVAS: A chapter of the National Audubon Society

The vision of Genesee Valley Audubon Society (GVAS) is to promote environmental conservation. Our mission is to educate and advocate for protection of the environment, focusing on birds, wildlife and habitat.

Keep up-to-date with our web site, www.gvaudubon.org

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The Meadowlark is published the 1st of September, November, January, March, and April. Articles for the Meadowlark should be submitted four weeks prior to the date of publication. Send articles to Joanne Mitchell, 169 Black Walnut Dr., Rochester, NY 14615, or at jwmitchell@rochester.rr.com.

Meadowlark staff: *Editor & Layout*, Joanne Mitchell; *Business Editor*, vacant; *Printing*, Minuteman Press; *Distribution*, vacant.

Fast Forward Film Festival

The members of GVAS are invited to attend the premier environmental film festival in Rochester. This short format film festival challenges filmmakers to utilize the power of visual storytelling to convey the urgency of our environmental problems and inspire environmental awareness. The finalists shown at the screening and the gala are fascinating and show many areas of environmental issues, so join the crowd. To see the trailer or purchase tickets go to: Fastforwardroc.org.

Thursday, April 21, 2016:

The Little Theatre
Screening begins at 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, April 23, 2016:

The Dryden Theatre
Gala begins at 6:00 p.m.

