



NYSOA

New York Birders

New York State

Ornithological Association, Inc.

For the Birders and Birds of the Empire State Since 1948

Volume 50 Number 1 (207) January 2021

NY Breeding Bird Atlas III: Year Two Begins! Atlas Corner: Great Horned Owls

By Julie Hart

The second field season has officially begun and some birds are breeding even in the snowy depths of winter. January is a great time to document breeding of our largest owl, the Great Horned Owl.



*Great Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus) © Roger Reets
Macaulay Library*

Natural History

Great Horneds are permanent residents, meaning that they stay on their territory year-round. Territories are established and maintained through hooting, with highest activity before egg-laying and second peak in autumn when juveniles disperse. These owls are crepuscular and nocturnal, meaning they are active around dusk and dawn and at night. They eat a wide variety of prey, from small invertebrates and rodents to large birds and hares. Their eyes are large to enable hunting in low light conditions, so large that they can only look straight ahead and must turn their head to see in other directions.

They do not build their own nest. They use old nests, often Red-tailed Hawk nests, but also nests of other birds and squirrels, and they will nest in cavities, in barns, and on ledges. Where you find a Great Horned, you are not likely to see other owls.

The female incubates the eggs and broods the young, while the male does most of the hunting to feed the female and young. While they are one of our earliest breeders, the altricial young are slow to develop. Incubation takes on average 33 days, the young are not capable of feeding themselves until age 20-27 days and can't climb out of the nest until they are 40 days old. They are capable of short flights soon thereafter at 45-49 days, and remain loosely associated with adults well into the fall with occasional food brought by the adults in September or even October. So, for example, if the eggs

(Continued on page 3)

In This Issue...

- 1 Atlas Corner: Great Horned Owls
- 2 From the President
- 2 New! Access Your NYSOA Member Profile
- 5 County & State Listing: Awaiting Your 2020 Report
- 6 Highlights of the Nov. Board of Directors Mtg.
- 7 Conservation Column: Common Tern Nesting Island, Niagara River Corridor
- 8 Profile of a NYSOA Volunteer: Shirley Shaw
- 9 Book Review: Winter World
- 9 2021 Checklist Booklet Now Available
- 10 Birders Remember Valerie Freer
- 11 Awards Chairperson Needed
- 12 NYSOA Speakers Bureau
- 14 Spring Ornithology Class with Steve Kress
- 14 Poetry Corner: Nature LI (51) by Emily Dickinson
- 15 From the Editor

From the President

Welcome 2021! We are all hoping for better things than 2020 brought us. I hope you got out New Year's Day to start your year list. Remember too to start looking for breeding behavior for those species that get off to an early start and enter your data in the atlas portal.

Let's choose to believe that with the vaccine NYSOA will be able to have some in-person activities before 2021 ends. We will be discussing plans for our annual meeting, although it is unlikely an in-person gathering can be held. It is more likely we will be able to plan a field trip or two. As always, safety and health concerns are priorities.

NYSOA continues its conservation work, more important than ever as regulations that were designed to protect birds and our environment have been rolled back. The work of the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) continues, and *The Kingbird* and *New York Birders* will arrive in your e-mail or mailbox as always.

Please visit nybirds.org to make your dues payments and donate if you can. In particular, the Lillian Stoner Fund, which provides money for youth to attend our in-person Birders' Conference and Annual Meeting, needs replenishing (<https://nysoa.wildapricot.org/Donate>). While we cannot hold in-person meetings now, funds will be needed to support attendees in 2022.

I wish you good birding, health, and safety.
Shirley Shaw, President

NYSOA Board Meeting Dates for 2021

All Virtual Meetings this Year

February 13

April 17

July 10

November 13

NEW! Access and Update Your NYSOA Member Profile

NYSOA has transitioned to a new membership system that not only simplifies our behind-the-scenes work but also will enable us to provide members-only web content in the future. In addition, members are now able to access their own account profile (and update it if their email or postal address changes).

NYSOA's membership pages are now hosted by a company called **Wild Apricot**, and the payment system used for online transactions from these pages is **AffiniPay**. We still use PayPal for gift memberships and standalone checklist and decal orders.

Please help us out by checking your member profile to make sure we have the correct information in our new database. While you're there, if you have not yet renewed your membership for 2021, you can do so by clicking the big blue **Renew** button displayed with your profile.

SETTING YOUR PASSWORD

1. Go to nybirds.org/setup.htm, enter your email address as your login ID, click the **I'm not a robot** box, and submit. *If your email address is not in our database, you will see an error message to that effect. Try a different email address or send us your email address at membership1@nybirds.org so we can add it to your profile.*
2. To ensure your profile's security, you will receive an email saying someone made a request to recover a lost password and giving you a link to set one.

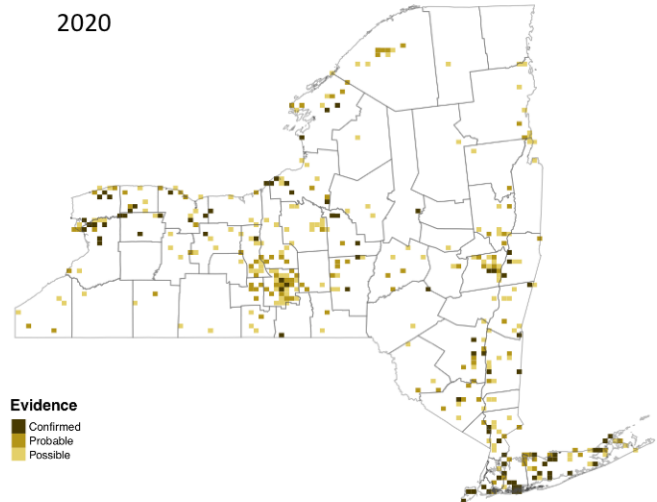
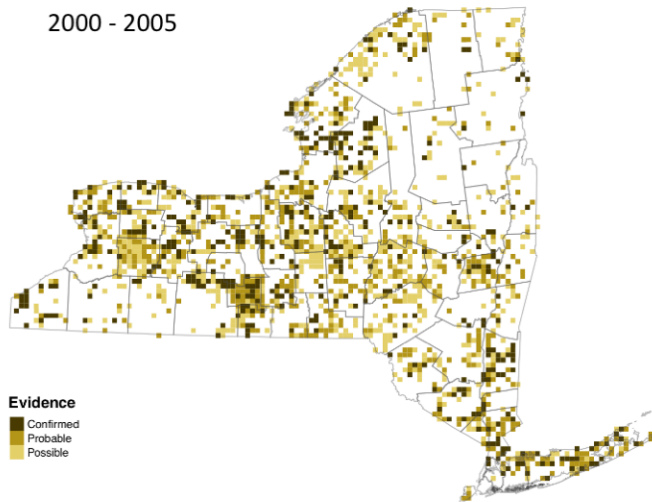
ACCESSING AND UPDATING YOUR PROFILE

Once you've set your password, you can access your profile. Go to <https://nysoa.wildapricot.org> and click **Log in** (just below big NYSOA banner). The first time you log in, you will be asked to accept Wild Apricot's terms of use. After you've done that, access your profile by clicking **My Profile** at the top.

If you have any questions, just email us at membership1@nybirds.org and we'll be happy to help!

- Carena Pooth

Great Horned Owl Observations



are laid March 1, the young are not flying until mid-late June.

Identification

Great Horneds are distinguished by their large size and large ear tufts. They vary in color across their range with more humid environments being darkest and arid regions having pale, sometimes almost white plumage. Individuals in the Northeast are intermediate in color and tend to have some reddish hues.

Males and females can be distinguished by their calls, with the larger females having a higher pitch than males. You can hear the difference in the following video: <https://macaulaylibrary.org/asset/416417>. The female is perched on a branch and starts calling with the male returning her call from nearby. This calling and responding is called a duet and is part of courtship. The male then joins the female in the video, they copulate, and then they perch together on the branch. If you hear Great Horneds duet, or are extremely lucky and see a pair copulate, record it as C – courtship, display, or copulation. If you just hear one individual it is recorded as S – singing bird or S7 if you hear it twice more than a week apart.

Where and How to Search

Once you have learned to recognize the calls of Great Horneds, it's time to head out in search of them. As of this writing, Great Horneds have been confirmed in 27 priority blocks and 72 total blocks. But as you can see in the figure comparing observations from the second atlas to those

made in 2020, they should be confirmed in many more blocks.

Great Horneds are widely distributed across North, Central, and South America in forested areas, usually near open areas for foraging. Within NY, they are distributed across the state but are less frequent in the Adirondacks, Catskills, Tug Hill, and Allegheny Plateau. As you can see in the map from 2020, most records so far have been near urban centers, indicating that much of the white areas are lacking targeted effort.

Great Horneds are not very responsive to playback, so finding them relies on listening for them in potentially suitable locations at the right time. There is a bit of luck involved, too. I asked two of the top Great Horned Owl contributors who lit up the map around Ithaca, Chris Wood and Ian Davies, for their top tips. Here's what they do to find Great Horneds.

Search Method

1. Identify large patches of mature forest adjacent to open areas.
 - Use the satellite view on Google Maps or scout the block in person during the day.
2. Identify multiple listening spots per block and determine your driving route. You can also walk, but you will cover less ground.
 - Aim for 'soundsheds' where you can hear a long distance, such as valley floors or ridgelines.
 - Pro tip: Find potential sites for multiple blocks, so that if you find an owl in one block, you can move on to the next in a single outing.

(Continued on page 4)

3. Choose a calm night or morning. Cloud cover and moon phase don't seem to matter as much.
 - If going out at night, arrive shortly before sunset to find a potential suitable area. Stay out for about an hour after sunset.
 - If going out in the morning, arrive an hour to an hour and a half before sunrise.
4. Listen for 3-5 min at each stop.
5. Stop along the road every half a mile to one mile, depending on the topography and how far sound travels.
6. Once you find a Great Horned in one block, head to another block (or head home to get some sleep!).
7. Visit the area again to upgrade the code.
 - If you only heard one individual calling, try heading back a week later to bump up the code to S7, a Probable code.
 - If you heard duetting, visit the forest about a month later and listen for young birds. You might just find the nest!
8. What time of year should you go out? Great Horneds call year-round, but based on data from 2020 (see the phenology chart below), they are duetting mostly from late January through March.
 - If you want to maximize your nocturnal atlasing, head out in March or April when the other owl species are also likely to be active.

Great Horned Owl Calendar

One of the advantages of entering breeding codes on every checklist *even if you've already documented the behavior*, is that we gain a fine-scale look at breeding phenology. If we plot each breeding code by date of observation, we can see when each species is mostly engaged in courtship, nest building, or raising young. The phenology chart for Great Horned Owl based on data from 2020 (below) shows that courtship begins January. Nests were occupied (i.e., incubation) in March and the first half of April, but as early as late-February and as late as early-May. Most fledglings are observed in May and June with some seen as early as the end of March.

Calendar

Jan-Mar: Courtship

Mar: Incubating

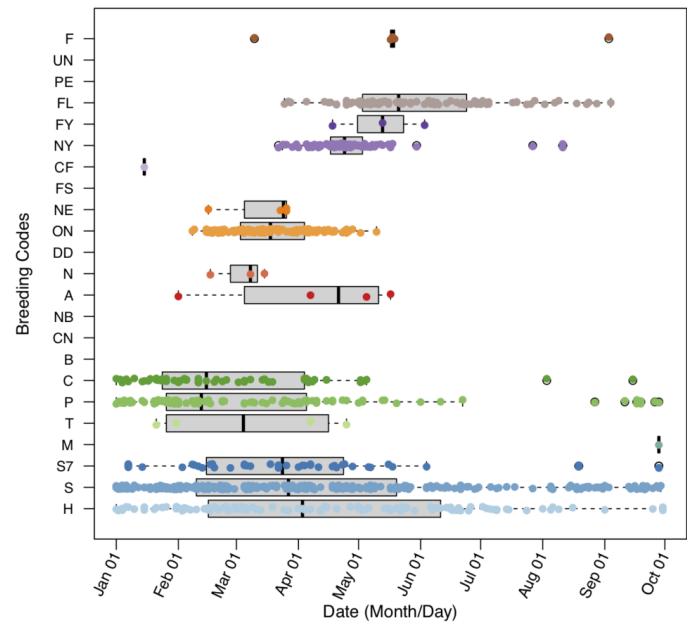
Apr: Nestlings, brooding, feeding young

May-Jun: Fledglings, feeding young

June-Oct: Juveniles associated with parents

Oct-Jan: Young disperse to find new territory

Great Horned Owl (n=951)



Breeding phenology plot showing the time of year each breeding behavior was recorded for Great Horned Owl based on 2020 Atlas data (951 observations through September). Standard box plots with median and first and third quartiles plotted. Based on raw, unvetted data.

Behaviors to Look For

Hooting: Monotonous calls that sound like someone blowing across the top of a bottle, described variously as “who-hoo-ho-oo” or “whoo-hoo-o-o, who.” The call is low in pitch and can carry for a long distance. This call is given for courtship, pair-bonding, and territorial advertisement and defense. Report as S – bird singing, or S7 if heard on multiple occasions a week or more apart in the same place.

Duetting: More animated form of hooting that is given simultaneously by a paired male and female. The female starts giving a series of hoots (6-7 notes) and the male responds within a few seconds giving a shorter series of hoots (5 notes), often overlapping with the female. This is part of courtship and should be recorded as C – courtship, display, copulation.

Courtship Display (rare): Males approach females bowing, hooting, and swelling their white “bib” while cautiously approaching the female. They engage in bouts of duetting and synchronous tail-bobbing while showing off their white bibs. Duetting is often interrupted by mutual bill-rubbing or preening to reinforce pair-bonding. The display concludes with copulation. Record this behavior as C – courtship, display, copulation.

(Continued on page 5)

Begging: In summer, it's a good idea to learn the juvenile begging call, which is often confused with calls of the extremely rare Barn Owl. This is unique to dependent juveniles so as long as you aren't close to block lines, hearing this is recorded as FL – recently fledged young.

Branching: As the owlets begin to leave the nest, they will spend most of their time sitting on the branch where the nest is located or on a nearby branch in a behavior called branching. Record branching birds as FL – recently fledged young.

Bill-clapping, hissing, screams, wing-flapping: These behaviors are used when the owls feel threatened. If you observe any of these behaviors, you are too close to the nest site or young and should retreat. These behaviors are also used to defend against intruding owls and predators. Use the A – agitated behavior code to record this behavior. Enter the code after you have retreated to a safe distance!

Spread wings: Threatened birds will crouch down and fan their wings out to make a shield so that they look bigger and more intimidating to the intruder. This is an even more extreme form of defense, often accompanied by bill-clapping, hissing, and screams. If you observe this behavior, you are too close! Back away immediately. Record as A – agitated behavior.



Male Pine Grosbeak in Long Lake (Hamilton Co.) on November 24, 2020. Photo © Joan Collins

County & State Listing – Awaiting Your 2020 Report!

By Carena Pooth

Do you have a teensy little tendency to be competitive? Or maybe you're just curious? See where your New York State and county life list totals place compared with others! The NYSOA County and State Listing Project is now accepting data for 2020. You can submit your data online at nybirds.org/ProjCountyLists.html (highly preferred) or via US Mail. The deadline for online submissions and postmarks is **March 1, 2021**.

eBirders, check our website for **tips for getting your report numbers from eBird**: <http://nybirds.org/CountyLists/ebirdhow.html>

The only requirement to participate in the project is that you be a 2021 member of NYSOA or one of its member clubs, or a 2021 Youth Member of the NYS Young Birders Club.

After the close of each calendar year, participants send in their life list totals for the entire state, the 10 Kingbird regions, and/or the 62 counties and/or the Pelagic Zone. You can send in just one number or as many as 75, or anywhere in between – it's your choice depending on where you've birded and what records you've kept. A compilation is produced annually and published in NYSOA's newsletter and also on the NYSOA website at nybirds.org/ProjCountyLists.html. Online & printable forms, plus a map of the ten Kingbird regions of the state, are available on that web page also.

Join in on the fun – but don't miss the deadline! And remember, reports submitted in previous years are NOT automatically carried forward. If you want your results included, you must submit your report, even if your numbers haven't changed since the last one you sent in.

A complete archive of County & State Listing Report compilations since the project started is available online at nybirds.org/ProjCountyLists.html.

Highlights of the November 2020 NYSOA Board of Directors Mtg.

The NYSOA Board of Directors met via Zoom on November 14, 2020 with ten of the eleven directors present.

The following organization items were addressed:

- Breeding Bird Atlas funds are now in a separate bank account.
 - **The next three NYSOA annual meetings** will be hosted as follows:
2021 (online)—Southern Adirondack Audubon
2022—Onondaga Audubon
2023—Saw Mill River Audubon
 - Committee appointments for 2020-21:
 - **Executive Committee:** Shirley Shaw, Mary Jane Dugan, Greg Lawrence.
 - **New York State Avian Records Committee** (for terms expiring): Willie D’Anna and Tom Burke.
 - **Finance Committee:** Andy Mason (chair), Shirley Shaw, Mary Jane Dugan, Mike DeSha.
 - Tentative nominations for 2021-22:
 - **Auditing Committee:** Stephen Chang (Chair), Tom Burke, Peter Capainolo
 - **Nominating Committee:** Bob Adamo, Mike DeSha (Chair), and Tim Baird.
 - **Approval of 2021 board meeting dates**, expected to all be virtual meetings:
February 13, April 17, July 10, November 13
 - **Overview of Wild Apricot membership software** being implemented by Carena Pooth for NYSOA to provide better tracking of membership and dues.
- via “Sponsor a Species” initiative. NYSOA will sponsor the Eastern Kingbird under this fundraising program at the rate of \$100/year for all five years, with all \$500 given at once, and drawn from the Memorial Fund.
 - Under **Conservation**, Andy Mason discussed issues of NYS accelerating review of wind/solar projects with deadline for comments extended into December. Genesee Valley Audubon Society put together a well-researched response letter and NYSOA has signed onto that letter and also forwarded it to member organizations to encourage sign on. NYSOA comments were earlier sent on the draft revisions for the NYS species listing for Endangered, Threatened and Special Concern but we do not yet know of any timeline for the next step of this review. Andy has responded to two conservation inquiries on behalf of NYSOA, one regarding wind power in Chenango County and another regarding development in Kingston.
 - **County Listing.** Carena Pooth noted the March 1 deadline for submissions with a submission form inserted in the October *New York Birders* and online here: <https://nybirds.org/ProjCountyLists.html>
 - **Field Trips** –Shirley reported that Mary Beth Warburton suggested a Spring 2021 field trip to Iroquois NWR/Braddock Bay. This is, of course, tentative depending on pandemic conditions with details to follow.
 - **NYS Young Birders Club**—Emily Van Gelder reported that one new member was added to bring total youth members to 30 with 22 supporting adult members and 21 partner clubs for 2020. In-person field trips suspended for now. Monthly Zoom meetings being held and supported by club alumni including Hope Batcheller, Lila Fried, Greg Lawrence, and Benjamin Van Doren.

Highlights of committee reports:

- The board received a report about the first year of the **NY Breeding Bird Atlas III** project from Kathryn Schneider including fundraising plans

*Anne Swaim
Recording Secretary*

Conservation Column: Common Tern Nesting Island Niagara River Corridor

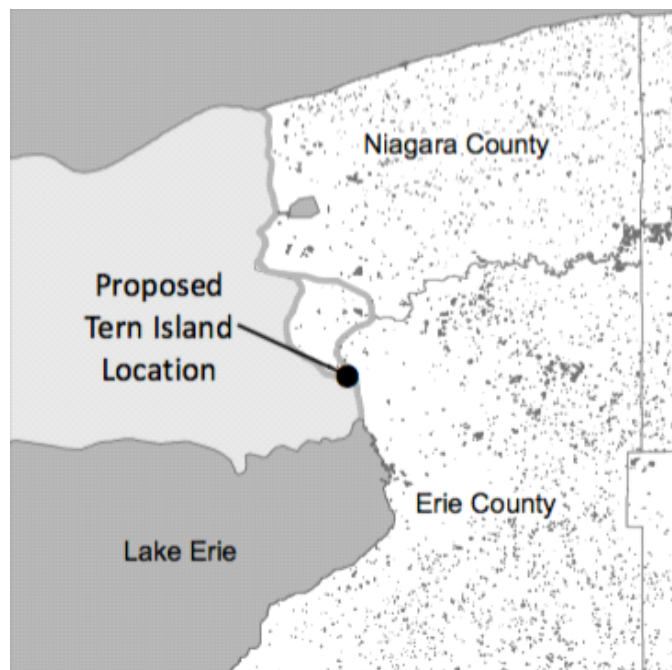
The Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) is a native resident bird in the Niagara River corridor. It is designated as Threatened by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, (NYSDEC), and the long-term health of the Niagara River population is essential for the species's regional survival.



The Buffalo Audubon Society, teamed with the NYSDEC (Region 9 staff), received approvals to construct an approximate 1.35 acre, man-made gravel nesting island in the Niagara River adjacent to existing Strawberry Island. The area available for nesting will be approximately 14,400 square feet. Based on observed nest density, numbers of chicks per square feet, productivity and survivorship seen at other locations in the Niagara River and Buffalo Harbor, this island could accommodate up to 1,500 nests and potentially produce as many as 500 to 750 chicks per year. This project seeks to restore native emergent vegetation to the Niagara River system, which will ultimately increase foraging, nesting, spawning, and cover habitat for fish and wildlife.

The approximately \$1.3M funding for this project comes from the New York Power Authority, Habitat Enhancement and Restoration Fund.

Once project completion is achieved in the Spring of 2021, the NYSDEC will partner with the Buffalo Audubon



Society to provide long-term monitoring for the project. The NYSDEC plans to incorporate this site into their annual Common Tern monitoring program. In May of each year, NYSDEC biologists and staff will prepare the island for nesting; i.e., raking gravel, building chick shelters and placing driftwood habitat structure, along with nest count surveys and chick banding.

The Buffalo Audubon Society is exploring plans and funding to assist the NYSDEC by recruiting, training and sending a small group of students into the field with a tern team leader to monitor and assist through the nesting season. If you would like more information on this exciting project, visit the Buffalo Audubon Society website at www.buffaloudubon.org



- Jerry Thurn

Profile of a NYSOA Volunteer:

Shirley Shaw

How long have you been a NYSOA member?

"I really don't know. My association with the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs began in the 1980's."

What positions have you held in the organization (and for how long)?

"I co-chaired the annual meetings in 1998 and 2018. I have served on the Board since 2016 and was elected president in 2020."

What is it about NYSOA that keeps you involved?

"I love getting together with people from across the state, attending field trips, and annual meetings. Beyond my personal enjoyment, NYSOA's work on conservation efforts and documenting New York's birds through NYSARC, *The Kingbird*, and the Breeding Bird Atlas work is absolutely necessary and of utmost importance."

How long have you been birding?

"50 years"

Did you have a particular experience that hooked you on birding?

"My mother loved to feed birds but was not a birder. There were certain birds that she really liked and talked about their calls and behavior frequently. One day I was looking at my backyard feeder and noticed that one of those little brown jobs was actually blue. It was an Indigo Bunting. That hooked me!"

What is your favorite place to go birding in NYS?

"It would be hard for me to choose between the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, and Nations Road IBA near Avon, NY. I also like Chaumont Barrens and Fort Drum."

Favorite species?

"Common Loon, Snowy Owl, Canada Warbler—I can't really say".

Is anyone else in your family a birder as a result of your interest?

"No, but I keep trying to get my husband more interested. He is truly into conservation issues, but field birding is not something he can physically



do. My daughter notices birds, but she works in places where people with binoculars are considered spies."

What do you do for a living?

"I'm a retired educator."

And any other information that you would like to add would be terrific!

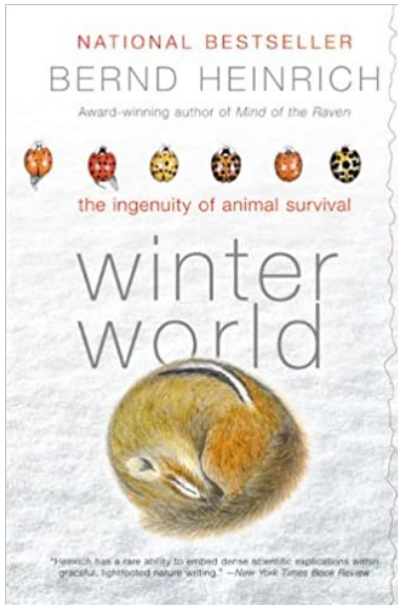
"For over 25 years I was on the Thousand Acre Swamp (Penfield, NY) Preservation Committee of The Nature Conservancy, where I was secretary and field trip organizer for many years. In 2004 I won the Friend of the Land Award from TNC's Central and Western NY Chapter. In the 1990's I was quite active in the Rochester Birding Association (RBA) and I was president for two years. I am still an RBA member, but recently I have been most involved with Burroughs Audubon Nature Club (BANC) —as secretary, as vice president, as president, on the program committee, whatever help I can give. BANC was founded in 1913, and it's still going strong. It owns two lovely properties and requires a lot more work on the part of the governing body than the work involved with an organization that does not own property."

Book Review: Winter World: The Ingenuity of Animal Survival

By Bernd Heinrich

Reviewed by James Van Gelder

In a rustic cabin in the wilderness of the Maine north woods dwells Bernd Heinrich, a modern renaissance man; scientist, professor, artist, athlete and author of twenty books. Of the several I have read this one is a particular favorite, dealing with the many ways animals adapt to the harsh conditions of winter.



Many of the subjects covered are what you might expect; hibernation, nests and dens, food storage, etc. What sets the book apart is how deeply he delves into each topic. A chapter on winter berries notes not only which are eaten by birds, but which birds and in what order. The physiology of hibernation is covered in detail. Much of the information is of recent discovery and not to be found in other books.

This is a long but very readable book written in an easygoing, informal style. Heinrich's many years of experience allow him to include examples of his own field work on almost every topic. This has the effect of taking you with him into the field as he crawls into a beaver lodge or counts the caterpillars eaten by a Golden-crowned Kinglet. Kinglets are a recurring theme in the book and the author's admiration for them is plain. These are the smallest of our songbirds, yet they remain in the Maine woods throughout the subzero winter. With a weight of only 6 grams and a body temperature of 111 degrees Fahrenheit they must forage for hidden insects every daylight moment. The strategies they use to survive the night, such as communal roosting and lowered body temperature, are covered in the last chapter. There are many fine illustrations by the author.

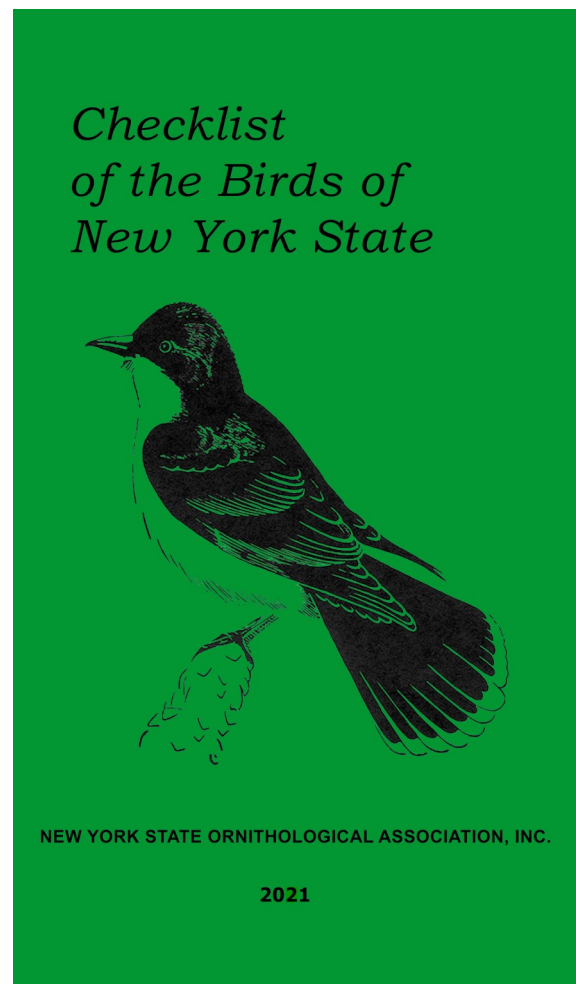
2021 Checklist Booklet Now Available!

The *Checklist of the Birds of New York State* includes all species for which acceptable specimen, photographic or written documentation exists for New York State. The list has been approved by NYSOA's New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) and includes 496 species representing 23 orders and 67 families of birds. The names of the birds and their taxonomic arrangement follow the American Ornithological Society's (AOS) *Check-list of North American Birds*, Seventh Edition, 1998, and subsequent supplements published in *The Auk* through June 2020 (42nd through 61st Supplements).

The Checklist of the Birds of New York State is available for \$3 a booklet, or \$22 for a 10-pack.

Order yours now!

<https://nybirds.org/membership/items.html>



Birders Remember Valerie Freer

On September 10, 2020, the birding community lost a distinguished constituent and dear friend, Valerie Freer. The December 2020 issue of NYSOA's journal, *The Kingbird*, includes a tribute to Valerie highlighting the tremendous contributions she made to our organization as well as the greater birding community. The Sullivan County Audubon Society (SCAS), which Valerie led for many years, devoted most of its Winter 2020 newsletter, *Warblings*, to personal remembrances written by some of her friends. All who knew Valerie will recognize the gifts she gave us in the excerpts below.

- Carena Pooth

Scott Baldinger: "When we moved up to Sullivan County and I joined Sullivan Audubon, Valerie made me feel welcome."

Arlene Borko: "I have many fond memories of field trips, both near and far, with her over the years. She taught many of us so much about birds and birding."

Rick Bunting: "She lives in all the aspects of the natural world we shared together and in all the things she enlightened through her gift of knowledge which she imparted with kindness and grace."

Tannar Cliffe: "It can be difficult to dwell on past memories of someone, but new ones can still be made even if they aren't here. The reason we cannot summarize the mark she left is because it is still growing, she will live on in all of us, and continue to teach us through every bird she sends our way."

Pat Cocot: "I will never forget the first meeting that I attended, Valerie made me feel at home as she introduced herself and others to me.... I surely miss Valerie; her sweet disposition, kindness and her wisdom."

Mary Collier: "Her passion for birds was contagious and she became known locally as 'The Bird Lady.'" Frequently she got phone calls from people with bird questions, which she graciously answered, teacher that she was."

Melinda Cormier: "Every time I was anywhere with Val, I learned something new, and a special moment became a treasured memory.... Val made me feel



special. She taught me to value each moment, and she shared her special gift with everyone. I treasure these moments, shared with wisdom, courage and a sense of humor. I will miss you Val. Thank you for the wonderful memories. May the Great Horned Owl gently fold you in his wings and cradle you in peaceful rest."

Bill Cutler: "...Martins were busy catching insects on the wing - and snatching leaves from Maple Trees! Valerie explained that Martins used the leaves in the colony, much like our more-familiar Tree Swallows use collected feathers for nesting. The image of beautiful Purple Martins showcased by Valerie's knowledge remains with me to this day!"

Renee Davis: "Valerie had a way about her. She could pull you into a project quicker than the speed of light, and you never saw it coming. Over the years she 'talked' me into several projects that have changed my life for the better."

Pat Dechon: “Valerie quickly became my mentor in all things ornithological and never failed to patiently explain how to better know the birds that we were seeing.... My children have cherished memories of hot chocolate and cookies while getting the rare opportunities to hold secretive, little owls.”

Marge Gorton: “Valerie was an excellent teacher, a great birder, and a caring friend. She was multi-talented and possessed a fine wry humor. She was truly a one-of-a-kind woman.”

Kate & Charles Hyden: “Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, who defined the seven stages of grief for the world, once said that ‘People are like stained glass windows: they sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light within.’ Valerie was such a person. We all saw and celebrated her giving light to others through her knowledge, wisdom and kindness. And when at last the darkness came to call on her, we all stood silent before her inner light.”

Ruth McKeon: “Rest in Peace Valerie, I'm certain you are up there tabulating all the birds in Heaven!”

Maura Muller: “One of the highlights of my time on this earth is participating in Saw-whet Owl banding at Valerie and Mary's home. What an astonishing evening!”

Truth Muller: “When I joined SCAS, I was the youngest member by several decades, as well as the least experienced at birding. I might have been intimidated, if not for Valerie; she always went out of her way to make me feel welcome and valued at meetings and on trips. She was a kind, thoughtful mentor to me from the beginning, and I am a better birder and scientist for knowing her.”

Carena Pooth: “Valerie never stopped being an educator and was always ready to give generously of her time and energy to create amazing learning experiences for others....Her lasting influence on all the young people she worked with is her most important legacy.”

Kathy Scullion: “As a “boss” Dr. Freer put a lot of faith and trust in me. She was so unflappable and patient, and generous with her time....And she occasionally made me go on spontaneous birding

outings with her when there was a good sighting in the area!”

Gloria Wagenknecht: “Like an anonymous donor, Valerie never wanted to bring attention to herself. She simply didn't need to. On the other hand, when she presented a plaque or if she wanted to spotlight another person's accolades, she had a way of building that person up to the stars and she seemed to relish every minute of expressing her appreciation and admiration.”

Awards Chairperson Needed

For the last several years, Bill Ostrander has been responsible for seeing that NYSOA's awards to various individuals and clubs are appropriately distributed and publicized. The NYSOA Board of Directors is grateful to Bill for his service. Bill recently resigned as our Awards Chairperson, and we are seeking someone to take his place.

Responsibilities for the position of Awards Chairperson are as follows:

- Monitor the occurrence of rare birds in the state to identify “hosts” who should be recipients of Certificates of Appreciation. Also prepare articles for our newsletter soliciting nominations for these certificates.
- Prepare articles for our newsletter and a letter to member organizations soliciting nominations for the Lillian C. Stoner Award, which provides financial assistance to students who attend our annual meeting.
- Coordinate with the Treasurer and President to ensure that recipients of monetary awards receive checks and that certificates are made and given to honorees.
- Oversee publication of the names of award recipients in the newsletter and on our website.
- Notify the Board of Directors of applications for grants received from member organizations.

If you would like to volunteer for the position or find out more information about it, please e-mail president1@nybirds.org.

NYSOA Speakers Bureau

As a service to our members, NYSOA publishes a list of speakers who are interested in presenting bird and nature related programs to groups. NYSOA does not endorse or review any of the programs available. Speakers are members of NYSOA. Groups interested in any of the listed programs need to contact the presenter directly. ****Note: Many presenters are willing to give virtual talks - just check with the presenter if interested.****

Name of Presenter: **Deborah Allen**

Email Address: dallenyc@earthlink.net

Mailing Address & Phone: Provided if a talk is scheduled.

Fees: Fee varies by group size. Travel distance 3 hours each way, for longer distances (up to 7 hours one way) costs include overnight accommodations.

Presentation Titles/Topics:

- (1) **Central Park Birds**
- (2) **NYC Birds.**

Name of Presenter: **Craig Braack**

Phone: 607-478-8039

Email Address: birdphotosbycrb@yahoo.com

Will travel across the state.

Presentation Titles/Topics:

- (1) **Birds of Florida** This program shows many of the beautiful birds most easily photographed in Florida. My handout covers many excellent locations in Florida and specific information about site, best times, where to stay, etc.
- (2) **Warblers of Magee Marsh** The best location to see and photograph warblers in North America is in northwest Ohio in Magee Marsh, part of the Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge. This program covers when and where to get great views and shots of warblers with details on where to stay and eat.
- (3) **Birds of The Bosque** The wintering Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese at the Bosque Del Apache NWR in New Mexico offers birders and bird photographers a tremendous experience. My program covers the basics of where to stay, photography locations and tips plus a digital slide program of these beautiful birds.

Name of Presenter: **Jody Enck**

Occupation/Company/Employer: Avian biologist and conservation social scientist

Phone: 607-319-4216

Email Address: jodyenck@gmail.com

Website: www.sisterbirdclubnetwork.com

Fees: Presenter requests travel expenses if more than 50 miles from Ithaca

Presentation Titles/Topics:

- (1) **Sister Bird Club Network**, linking birders throughout the hemisphere through the migratory birds we love so much -- what, why, and how?
- (2) **What makes a birder a birder?** Jody is a social scientist who has applied identity theory to the study of people who enjoy interacting with birds. He has found up to 14 specific identity types who gain a variety of meanings from their relationship with birds. Interestingly, behaviors are very poor indicators of these identity types because different people can participate in the same activity but for different purposes. This is not a wonky, sciency talk, but rather a fun exploration of what it means to be a birder.

Name of Presenter: **Richard Guthrie**

Phone: 518-756-9094

Email Address: richardpguthrie@gmail.com

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 46, New Baltimore, NY 12124

Fees: Presenter requests expenses covered and an honorarium if the organization can afford one.

Willing to travel statewide with accommodations.

Presentation Titles/Topics:

- (1) **My How You've Changed** (50+ years of birding in New York State and the changes Richard has seen)
- (2) **Summer Songbirds—Some are Not**
- (3) **Birds of New York—from Hummingbirds to Eagles, Not Necessarily in that Order**
- (4) **Ivory-billed Woodpecker—An Eyewitness Account**
- (5) **a program for middle school children** - simple, direct and with lots of familiar examples of local birds with a smattering of some exciting ones to stretch a little
- (6) **Cuba - Birds, People, Cars, and Cigars**
- (7) **South Africa - Big Birds and Animals, and some small ones too.**

Name of Presenter: **Victor S. Lamoureux, Ph.D.**

Phone: 607-770-6897

Email Address: vlamoureux@stny.rr.com

Mailing Address: 885 Bunn Hill Road, Vestal, N.Y. 13850

Fees: Presenter will negotiate for a fee and travel reimbursement.

Presentation Titles/Topics:

Programs about amphibians, birding topics, grizzly bears, nature photography, and many other ecology and behavior topics. Contact the presenter for his full list of programs.

Name of Presenter: **Andy Mason**

Phone: 607-652-2162

Email Address: andymason@earthling.net

Mailing Address: 13 Boylston St., Oneonta, NY 13820

Fees: Presenter does not charge a fee. Willing to travel 150 miles.

Presentation Titles/Topics:

Program about the Franklin Mountain Hawk

Watch: Franklin Mountain is a premier location for observing the fall migration of raptors, including impressive numbers of Golden Eagles. The Hawk Watch is located on property of the Delaware- Otsego Audubon Society.

Name of Presenter: **Shai Mitra**

Occupation/Company/Employer: Biology Department, College of Staten Island

Phone: 718-982-3858

Email Address: shaibal.mitra@csi.cuny.edu

Mailing Address: 2800 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, NY 10314

Presentation Titles/Topics: Programs on a variety of birding topics:

- (1) **Bird migration on Long Island**
- (2) **Bird records in the information age: Opportunities and challenges posed by new media.**
- (3) **Recent changes in status and distribution of NYS Birds: Insights from citizen science and implications for conservation**
- (4) **Avian vagrancy to coastal NY: Insights into the composition and conservation of avian communities**
- (5) **Winter landbirds in the coastal Northeast: Half-hardy birds in a half-harsh environment**
- (6) **Teaching biology: Understanding birds and using natural history to engage teachers and students of biology**
- (7) **Finding and Identifying Gulls in NYS***
- (8) **Finding and Identifying Shorebirds in NYS***
- (9) **Chasing Wild Geese in an Era of Climate Change: More Diversity (and Debate) than Ever Before**
- (10) **Hawks Aloft: Watching Migrating Raptors in NYS***

*Also available in versions tailored to Long Island or its sub-regions.

Name of Presenter: **John Rogers**

Occupation/Company/Employer: Co-founder, NYS Bluebird Society

Phone: 315-363-2771

Email Address: JR1950@aol.com

Mailing Address: 323 Seneca St., Oneida, NY 13421

Fees: Presenter requests a reasonable amount to help with travel expenses. No other fee applies. Willing to travel any distance statewide.

Presentation Titles/Topics:

Bluebirds - and More: This quality PowerPoint presentation includes the life history of the Eastern Bluebird, other birds that nest in bluebird boxes, nest box management, and more. The program has variety and is inspirational. The focus is definitely on bluebirds, but sprinkled throughout are just a few other birds, wildflowers, butterflies, and quotes by some of the great naturalists of the past.

Names of Presenters: **Scott Stoner and Denise Hackert-Stoner**

Occupation/Company/Employer: Naturelogues

Phone: 518-785-6760

Email Address: scottjstoner@aol.com

Website: www.naturelogues.com

Mailing Address: 6 Knob Hill Rd., Albany, NY 12211

Fees: \$100 plus travel expenses if beyond greater Capital Region; will travel anywhere in NYS

Presentation Titles/Topics: We offer one hour digital slide programs on the following topics; detailed descriptions are on our website:

- (1) **Unbroken Wings: A Story of Birds and the People Who Saved Them**
- (2) **Birding America's Southwest**
- (3) **Birding South Florida**
- (4) **Valley of Birds - Birding the Rio Grande Valley**
- (5) **From Sea to Sea: Birding Southern California**
- (6) **Florida's Everglades**
- (7) **Exploring the Hudson River**
- (8) **How to Photograph Birds (1 hr workshop)**
- (9) **On the Edge: The Harrowing Lives of Birds**
- (10) **Attracting birds to your Backyard**

Spring Ornithology with Steve Kress Sponsored by Cayuga Bird Club

Would you like to learn more about birds and their lives? Register now for the Cayuga Bird Club's *Spring Ornithology with Steve Kress*, held Tuesday evenings March 30 to May 18 via Zoom. This course is perfectly timed to help people identify spring migrants and better understand bird behavior. Each weekly meeting features a group of migratory birds that are at the peak of their spring migration, with discussions about bird song, migration, courtship, family life, conservation, and how to create a bird-friendly habitat on your own property. Dr. Kress, well known for his entertaining and engaging teaching style, illustrates each presentation with stunning photos and bird song recordings. Although the course focuses on birds of the northeastern U.S., most of the identification, behavior, and conservation tips are relevant to people everywhere. Dr. Kress served for many years as Director of the Audubon Seabird Restoration Program and Hog Island Audubon Camp in Maine, and has written numerous books, articles, and online courses about birds and wildlife conservation. Classes are recorded for viewing or reviewing at your convenience. Details and registration at: www.cayugabirdclub.org/spring-ornithology



Blue Jay. Photo © Larry Master

The Collected Poems of Emily Dickinson Part Two: Nature LI (51)

No brigadier throughout the year
So civic as the jay.
A neighbor and a warrior too,
With shrill felicity

Pursuing winds that censure us
A February day,
The brother of the universe
Was never blown away.

The snow and he are intimate;
I've often seen them play
When heaven looked upon us all
With such severity,

I felt apology were due
To an insulted sky,
Whose pompous frown was nutriment
To their temerity.

The pillow of this daring head
Is pungent evergreens;
His larder — terse and militant —
Unknown, refreshing things;

His character a tonic,
His future a dispute;
Unfair an immortality
That leaves this neighbor out.

From the Editor

To kick off the second year of the NY Breeding Bird Atlas III project, Julie Hart wrote a wonderful Atlas Corner column on a species that breeds in winter, the Great Horned Owl.

Carena Pooth provided an exciting update on NYSOA's new membership system hosted by Wild Apricot! She provides directions on how to access your profile in the article. Carena also reminds members to send in their 2020 County and State Listing Project data before March 1st.

Anne Swaim gave the highlights of the November 14, 2020 Board of Directors meeting (meetings are currently held via Zoom).

Jerry Thurn authored the Conservation Column about an exciting project to build a Common Tern nesting island in the Niagara River Corridor. It should be completed by the spring of 2021, and hopefully, Jerry will write a follow-up piece with results!

Shirley Shaw provided her usual "From the President" column and she is also featured in the "Profile of a NYSOA Volunteer" column this quarter!

James Van Gelder reviewed *Winter World* by Bernd Heinrich. It is terrific to have book reviews in the newsletter – it would be nice to include reviews of birding apps too!

The 2021 *Checklist of the Birds of New York State* is now available and a green color this year!

Birders provided lovely remembrances of Valerie Freer, who passed away on September 10, 2020. (The December *Kingbird* issue includes a comprehensive tribute to Valerie.)

The annual Speakers Bureau list is also included in this issue with a note that many speakers are likely giving virtual presentations during the pandemic.

A note about the Spring Ornithology course with Steve Kress was sent by Cayuga Bird Club.

A lovely Emily Dickinson poem is fitting for this stormy winter!

Thank you to all the newsletter contributors!

- Joan Collins



*Russet-colored Pine Grosbeak in Pottersville, NY (Warren Co.) on November 23, 2020.
Photo © Joan Collins.*

NEW YORK BIRDERS

New York Birders is published four times a year by the New York State Ornithological Association, Inc.

Officers

President:	Shirley Shaw
Vice President:	Greg Lawrence
Recording Secretary:	Anne Swaim
Treasurer:	Mary Jane Dugan

Directors

Patricia Aitken	2021
Shane Blodgett	2022
Joseph Brin	2022
Brian Dugan	2021
Corey Finger	2022
Brendan Fogarty	2021
Lucretia Grosshans	2021
Patricia Riexinger	2022
Gerald Thurn	2022

Term Expires

Send membership inquiries and address changes to:

NYSOA, Inc.
P. O. Box 25
Long Lake, NY 12847
email: membership1@nybirds.org

Please address newsletter correspondence to:

Joan Collins
PO Box 556
Long Lake, NY 12847
email: newsletter1@nybirds.org

Submissions for the April 2021 issue of *New York Birders* should reach the editor by March 15, 2021.

Web address: www.nybirds.org

Purposes

The purposes of the New York State Ornithological Association, Inc. are to further the study of birds, bird life and lore; to foster, inculcate and disseminate knowledge and appreciation thereof; to preserve and protect birds and other wildlife and their environment; and to educate the public in the need for conserving natural areas and resources.

Membership Application

To: NYSOA, Inc.
P.O. Box 25
Long Lake, NY 12847

Please enroll me as a member of the New York State Ornithological Association, Inc. (Memberships include the quarterly journal, *The Kingbird*, and *New York Birders*, newsletter of NYSOA.) Membership enrollment information also available at www.nybirds.org.

I enclose \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State & Zip _____

Email: _____

Membership Categories

Please Circle One:

Student	\$20	Contributing	\$50
Individual	\$30	Kingbird Club	\$100
Family	\$35		

Membership dues include electronic publications.

For paper publications, please circle and include the applicable amount in your payment.

Send paper to	Kingbird Club	All Others
Address Within USA	No add'l charge	\$10
Canada or Mexico	\$10	\$20
Other non-US Address	\$20	\$30

Make check payable to New York State Ornithological Association, Inc., in U. S. funds.

Club Memberships — Please inquire by letter to the address above or via email to president1@nybirds.org.

New York Birders
P.O. Box 25
Long Lake, NY 12847

NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
HOMER, NY 13077
PERMIT NO 8

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER