

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are free and open to the public. Novice birders (and non-birders too!) are welcome. If you are planning to join us on a field trip, you should notify the leader whose telephone number is listed with the trip details. Please call at a reasonable hour as most birders turn in early. Carpooling from the meeting place is encouraged. If your schedule allows you to join the carpool, do remember to offer to help the driver with the cost of gas.

Occasionally changes in published field trips and/or additional trips are announced on the OAS Birdbox, phone (315) 637-0318, and on the OAS website (www.onondagaudubon.org).

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS (AND SWAMPS)

May 12, Saturday, 1/2 - 3/4 day

Natalia Garcia 696-8615

After meeting at the Rt.81 -Tully Park & Ride, we'll visit the habitat of **Louisiana** and **Northern Waterthrush** (gorges & wooded swamps, respectively) and compare the songs of these two similar warblers. Other warblers, thrushes and possibly **Winter Wren**, **Barred Owl**, and **Pileated Woodpecker**. A bit wet underfoot, but moderately easy.

BIG RUN/BIRDATHON

May 19, Saturday, as much time as you can give in Region 5, AND May 20, Sunday afternoon

We will meet at Derby Hill for a potluck dinner to compile and hear everyone's bird finds of the day before. For details see separate Birdathon page in this *Kestrel* and/or phone coordinator,

Dave Wheeler 373-5350

WHISKEY HOLLOW & VICINITY

May 26, Saturday, 3/4 day

Joe Brin 638-8309

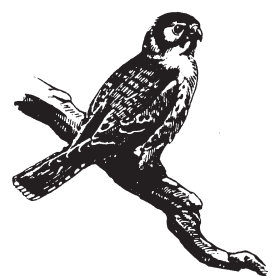
A many years' traditional spring migrants and breeding birds trip to a wonderful gorge which is an Important Bird Area and partly protected by Save The County Land Trust. Joe is an expert on bird songs and teaching them to you. Special birds are the **Cerulean Warbler**, which should be listed as threatened, and **Hooded** and **Mourning Warblers**, **Yellow-throated**
Field Trips continue on page 6



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THE KESTREL



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THE KESTREL



Onondaga Audubon Society
A Chapter of National Audubon

Serving Onondaga, Oswego, Madison,
Lewis and Jefferson Counties for 54 Years

Volume 38 - Number 2

May - June - July 2007

PROGRAMS see pg 2 for meeting location

MEMBERS NIGHT

Wednesday, May 9

For this meeting we will have an open forum for members to share their slides, birding stories, bird information, etc., to share with other members. Bring your birding questions as well!

We look forward to seeing you there!

Programs will be not be held during the summer months of June, July, and August. The next program will be held September 12, 2007, speaker to be announced.

OAS BANQUET
Wednesday, June 13, 2007
Drumlins Country Club,
800 Nottingham Road
Syracuse.

Dr. John Confer will be our banquet speaker!



Dr. Confer is an Emeritus Professor from Ithaca College. He has taught classes specifically dealing with Animal Ecology and Ornithology. His research has concentrated on species diversity and abundance as well as man's impact on brushland birds in natural ecosystems. Some of Dr.

Confer's more recent research involves measuring the frequency of hybridization in birds by DNA analyses. For the OAS banquet, he will be discussing the biology and ecology of Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers.

IN THE FIELD

SEEKING A BICKNELL'S THRUSH: A NIGHT HIKE ON SLIDE MOUNTAIN

Brian White

The flashlight suspended on a cord around my neck illuminated the stepping-stones as I picked my way carefully across the braided channels of the west branch of the Neversink River. It was 2:45 am on 20 June 2006 and after only 50 yards into my solo climb of Slide Mountain, the highest of the Catskill Mountains, I had reached what I had anticipated would be the most difficult part of my hike. Safely across the river and thankful to be still dry-shod, I began to gain height guided by the reflective yellow trail markers shining in the beam of my headlamp.

Even though it is not unusual for me to hike alone at night in the mountains it still feels a little creepy. In the general silence the small sounds of nocturnal creatures scurrying through the dry leaves of the forest floor can be imagined as a marauding bear. My

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Bicknell's Thrush
Photo courtesy of Brandt Ryder

THE KESTREL

Vol. 38 - No. 2 May - June - July 2007

Editor Julie Covey
Distribution Elizabeth Chapman

Officers, Chairs & Directors - 2006-2007

| | |
|--------------------|---|
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| Vice-President | Dave Nash |
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| Programs | Gerry Smith |
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| Noyes Sanctuary | Bob Long |
| Field Trips | Marge Rusk |
| Publicity | Rick Barrett, Judith Lockwood |
| Hospitality | Cathy Kerr |
| Directors | Cathy Kerr, Judith Lockwood, Dave Perrin, George Spak. |

Onondaga Audubon Society, Inc. is a chapter of the National Audubon Society. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month from September to May, excluding January and February at May Memorial Unitarian Church in DeWitt (located at 3800 E. Genesee St.) and usually run from 7pm to about 9pm. Field trips are held year round to observe birds, wildflowers and other aspects of nature. All programs and field trips are free and open to the public.

OAS owns and operates two sanctuaries on Lake Ontario: Derby Hill Bird Observatory and Noyes Sanctuary. Derby Hill is an important site for spring hawk migration. Both sanctuaries have maintained trails and are free and open to the public dawn to dusk.

Chapter members receive *The Kestrel* newsletter. Members may also join in the work of Onondaga Audubon and its sanctuaries.

OAS maintains a birding hotline which reports and records information about rare birds and other topics of interest to birders and members. The phone number is: **315-637-0318**.

Problems with subscriptions should be referred to membership chair, Elizabeth Chapman.

Letters to the Editor may be sent to:
Onondaga Audubon Society, Inc.
P.O. Box 620, Syracuse, NY 13201
Phone 315-637-0318
<http://www.onondagaaudubon.org>

The mission of the Onondaga Audubon Society is to engender in the people of the Central New York Community a greater appreciation of wildlife, land, water, and other natural resources. The members of Onondaga Audubon believe this will lead to the wiser use of these resources and encourage this result through our programs, field trips, sanctuary management and environmental education.

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GET YOUR STORY PUBLISHED!

| | |
|---|---|
| If you have a bird-related family activity or experience that you would like to share, please send it to: | Onondaga Audubon Society, Inc. P.O. Box 620, Syracuse, NY 13201 |
|---|---|

Please indicate on the envelope that it is for *The Kestrel*.



Onondaga Audubon Society Chapter Membership Application

For information on National Audubon Society membership please visit the OAS website: <http://www.onondagaaudubon.org>.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN:

To enroll as a member of the Onondaga Audubon Society chapter only please send your name, address, and a check for \$15, made payable to the Onondaga Audubon Society, to:

Elizabeth Chapman
250 Oarlock Circle
East Syracuse NY 13057

You will receive *The Kestrel* newsletter 4 times per year.

Onondaga Audubon Society Chapter Code:

RO5
7XCH

Sign up now for the most exciting bird watching event of the year and help fund Onondaga Audubon Society's LOCAL environmental education and sanctuary priorities.

Onondaga Audubon Society's 49th Annual



BIRDATHON



Saturday, May 19, 2007

Don't be Shy, Give the Birdathon a Try!

Bird enthusiasts of all levels of experience are invited to participate in this exciting bird identification challenge - and to raise funds for the Onondaga Audubon Society. So set aside the day, start beating the bushes for teammates, and prepare to do your best during Birdathon 2007 - timed to coincide with the absolute peak of Spring migration in Central New York.

HOW THE BIRDATHON WORKS

Date and Time: Go afield for as many (or as few) hours as desired between midnight and midnight, Saturday, May 19, 2007 — no rain date!

Boundaries: Bird within the counties of Onondaga, Oswego, Madison, Oneida, Herkimer, and/or that half of Cayuga County north of Route 31 — more than 5,000 square miles.

Teams: Join another, form you own, or go solo. No assigned territories. Please car pool, and bird one place at a time — no splitting up!

Count: Carefully identify species by sight and/or ear — the honor system please!

Fund-raising: Lining up sponsors (flat donations or so many cents per species) is optional — but definitely encouraged!

Bird List Deadline: Get your information to the Day-After Compilation Picnic at Derby Hill Sunday, May 20, at 4:00PM.

Final Bird Results: Onondaga Audubon will report all in its September/October issue of *The Kestrel* newsletter.

Dollars Deadline: Turn in to Onondaga Audubon by June 15, 2007.

2007 FUND-RAISING GOAL (\$7,000) AND CAUSES

Proceeds will be used to fund OAS education efforts, including Audubon Adventures, and to support Derby Hill Bird Observatory, the crown jewel of the Onondaga Audubon Society.

RECORDS TO BEAT

Most Participants - 43 teams; 116 members (1999)

Most Money - \$7,500 (2001)

Most Species Combined - 200 (1999)

BUSINESS SUPPORTERS

Donations for prizes are currently being sought from local businesses. If you would like to donate a prize for the Birdathon, please contact Dave Wheeler.

FOR FULL DETAILS AND ALL MATERIALS

Contact: Dave Wheeler,
Birdathon Coordinator
Phone: 315-373-5350
Email: Birdathon@AOL.com
Mail: Dave Wheeler
103 Brookhaven Rd.
North Syracuse, NY 13212



FIELD TRIPS *continued from pg 8*

Vireo, several thrush species, and **Scarlet Tanager**. Hopefully, **Acadian Flycatcher** will be “on location”. Moderately difficult - steep, muddy trails.

THREE RIVERS WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

June 2, Saturday, about 3/4 day

Joe Brin 638-8309

TRWMA may not be as conventionally scenic as last weeks venue, but the “Blueberry Patch” with its border of Black Gum woods, the new leaves sparkling bright green, has great charm. **Hermit Thrush**, **Nashville** and **Black-and-white Warbler** and **Field Sparrow**, among others, seem to like it. Other spots in this sandy area with wide, flat trails, are also fine for seeing birds and learning their songs. There may be an **Osprey** and **Bald Eagle** nest. Easy.

NORTHERN ADIRONDACKS WEEKEND

Saturday, June 2 & Sunday, June 3

Bernie Carr, coordinator 469-9379

Paul Smiths Visitors' Center is the staging place for trips to look for Adirondack specialties like Black-backed Woodpecker, Gray Jay, and Boreal Chickadee. Call Bernie about logistics - carpooling, when to meet, where to stay overnight. This trip is for the beginning to mid-level birders, and the walking is easy to moderate.

ONONDAGA CREEK

Saturday, June 9, 1/2 day

Catherine Landis 445-1760

Based on her Master's work at ESF, Catherine will show us the breeding birds of the Onondaga Creek valley and their varied habitat both up and downstream from Darwin Ave., from brilliant Baltimore Orioles to Willow Flycatcher, her specialty. Easy.

SPECIAL GRASSLAND BIRDS OF FORT DRUM

Tentatively, Saturday, July 7, all day

Jeff Bolsinger Phone: Marge Rusk 476-7635

Jeff is a regional *Kingbird* editor and contract biologist at Fort Drum, and very knowledgeable about grassland birds, including Henslow's Sparrow which nests there. People participating in the trip will need to obtain an access permit at least 2 weeks beforehand. Order forms and all other information about obtaining a pass and visiting Fort Drum can be found at the following website: <http://www.drum.army.mil/garrison/pw/FishAndWild.html>.

The trip itself will be easy.

SPRING BIRD QUEST

Join the Finger Lakes Land Trust for their Spring Bird Quest!

Help support bird habitat conservation! Discover the diversity of birds on protected lands! Spend time with other birders!

By late May, as the great northward tide of migration finally subsides, birds will be busy throughout our region with courtship, building nests and rearing young—the beginning of the cycle of life for a new generation. If you cherish birds, there may be no more thrilling a time of year—and there is no better place to watch them than at the Finger Lakes Land Trust's 24 nature preserves.

The Finger Lakes Land Trust will hold its first Spring Bird Quest over Memorial Day weekend (May 26-28) 2007. Over three days participants will count bird species on Land Trust nature preserves, enjoying the dazzling diversity of local avifauna while raising pledge money to support the conservation of significant bird habitat within the Finger Lakes.



At the end of the weekend all participants are invited to an informal gathering at the Land Trust's Ithaca office where they can share their findings and experiences, and celebrate the close of the event.

Why Participate?

- To raise awareness about the diversity of local birds, and the Finger Lakes Land Trust's role in protecting them.
- To raise funds to sustain the Land Trust's continued efforts to preserve vital bird habitat.
- To enjoy spending time with other birders from around the region

Birders of all skill level are welcome. For more information visit www.fllt.org or call 607-275-9487.

IN THE FIELD *from page 1*

range of vision is limited to the rocky stairway lit by the dangling flashlight and the way ahead revealed by the narrow searching beam of the headlamp. I am doing this in the hope that I will find a Bicknell's thrush. It wasn't the first time that I'd made such a night-time venture, as I have participated in the Mountain Birdwatch project when my summer work schedule permits. I had chosen Slide Mountain for the search because I had climbed the mountain a few times both in summer and winter and felt that I knew the trail well enough not to get lost in the dark. But there are many such mountains and I'd chosen Slide because it was here in 1881 that Eugene Bicknell first described the Bicknell's thrush; although it wasn't until over a century later, in 1995, that it was acknowledged as a species separate from the Gray-cheeked thrush.

It isn't easy to find companions for such an adventure. This is partly because not many people combine a love of birding with a desire to climb mountains in the middle of the night. A common response to an invitation to participate in such an adventure usually involves comments like “Are you crazy?” or even worse. Perhaps more difficult to coordinate with others is the matter of timing and planning. For example, up until late on the previous evening I hadn't known whether the weather conditions would be conducive to a successful attempt. The day had been unpromising; hot and humid with thunderstorms and some heavy rain. However, a cold front barreled through during the afternoon and cleared away the humidity and clouds and at 11 pm I made the go decision and left Hamilton. I hadn't bargained for the thick fog I encountered in places en route and the resulting navigational errors and delays that made me later than planned in reaching the trailhead.

Nevertheless, I made rapid progress up the mountain. In the darkness I wasn't detained by looking at plants or birds and I heard none of the hoped-for owls. I recognized a couple of sharp turns in the trail that re-assured me I was still on track and glimpses of the moon through the trees seemed friendly omens. At 4:12 am I reached the balsam fir forest at around 3800 feet and the first signs of the coming daylight began to lighten the eastern skies. Here I stopped for a minute or two for a water-break, but soon pushed on through the thick and enclosing forest.

At 4:30 I was delighted to hear the beer call of a Bicknell thrush and three minutes later one began to sing. I was jubilant as already I could regard my adventure a success.

At 4:40 a Dark-eyed junco began singing; to be joined five minutes later by a Blackpoll warbler. I was delighted

to have the comparison of these species songs so close together. Interestingly, I found the warbler's song much easier to hear in the field than on my cassette tape. At 4:47 a Swainson's thrush joined the morning chorus and five minutes later I had crossed the summit and reached the outcrop of red Devonian sandstones with its monument plaque to John Burroughs.

From this rocky perch I enjoyed a mountaineer's reward. The sky filled with delicate pink, orange, and yellow heralding the sunrise; the crescent waning moon arcing ahead of the sun; bright Venus in morning star mode. At 4:54 a close-by White-throated sparrow added its voice to the birdsong. At 5:08 low cloud and fog blew in and visibility went from limitless to 50 meters or less in a matter of moments. It turned cold too and all the birds except the White-throated sparrow stopped singing. Fortunately the clouds dispersed at 5:18 just as the rim of the rising sun showed above the northeastern mountain horizon. The valleys to the north were filled by fog, looking like some ancient Alpine glaciers; whereas the mountaintops were bathed in early morning sunshine. At 5:43 I heard a fairly distant Winter wren singing its ode to joyous living – so I'd seen or heard all five of the Mountain Birdwatch target species. At about the same time the mosquitoes had woken up with the warming sunshine and the summit area became decidedly less attractive. It was time to return to the valley and the rhythms of normal life. But for a few precious hours I'd been physically and emotionally in a different place. “Are you crazy?” You can be the judge; but I know my own answer.

To read more on Bicknell's Thrush please visit: <http://www.audubon2.org/webapp/watchlist/viewSpecies.jsp?id=27>

Editor's note:

The CONSERVATION article will return in the next edition of the *Kestrel*. Gerry Smith, Conservation Chair, is taking this edition off to enjoy the sights at Derby Hill.

A REMINDER TO SCIENCE EDUCATORS

Onondaga Audubon Society will once again make the Ruth Engelbrecht Scholarship available this coming year. The winner will attend the Educators Workshop at the Maine Audubon Society's Hog Island Camp the week of July 15-21. For a complete session description, visit www.maineaudubon.org. Please see our website, www.onondagaaudubon.org for the application form. All submissions must now be in by May 15.

Judith Lockwood, Education Chair

