

The Observer

Newsletter of the Rockland Audubon Society



Vol. 64, No. 1
February - April 2011

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Rockland Audubon Society's mission is to promote environmental conservation and foster an appreciation of birds and nature through education programs and activities.

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Audubon New York Examines Hydraulic Fracturing

By Caroline McDonald, RAS Board of Directors

ITHACA, N.Y.—At its fall meeting of the Audubon Council of New York State here, Friday evening and much of Saturday were devoted to discussions of hydraulic fracturing, the process of removing natural gas from large underground shale formations. Popularly known as “fracking,” the process uses large volumes of water and a number of chemicals, which are injected into the ground to increase natural gas flow and recovery in these shale formations.

The documentary “Gasland” was shown the first night. The film, by Josh Fox, looks into the issue of hydraulic fracturing, interviewing people who have allowed drilling on their property. According to the documentary, some property owners in Pennsylvania and other states who signed lease agreements have experienced a number of issues, including contaminated water and wells located in close proximity to their homes. One homeowner featured in the film set fire to his tap water—made possible because of methane gas now present in his water supply. The film warns of possible consequences of drilling, noting that the presence of oil wells and loss of trees and vegetation could impact the state’s landscape.

On Saturday, a panel discussion on the science, legislation and regulation guiding hydro-fracking took place at the council meeting. Information was presented by Bill Kappel, Hydrogeologist for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and Dereth Glance, Executive Program Director for Citizens Campaign for the Environment. While Kappel pointed out that there is much publicity about “the ones that go wrong, we don’t hear about the many that don’t go wrong,” he noted that New York currently is not able to regulate the large amounts of water needed for the process. The USGS said in a fact sheet that the hydraulic fracturing process can require up to three million gallons of water per treatment and that many local water management agencies are concerned about the consequences of obtaining such volumes of water from their water supplies.

Kappel explained that a potential impact of drilling is trucks moving into and out of well locations, “hundreds per site.” He said that “tremendous land clearing” is also needed to install the pipelines that transport recovered gas. Among other things, he said, states can regulate usage of local roads traveled by these trucks and have a say in the location of wells and gas pipelines.

Glance questioned the rush to get natural gas drilling started in New York. She expressed concern about fragmentation of habitat and liquid waste by-products. This liquid waste, she said, can result in spills and open pits of fracking fluid—potentially putting birds and other wildlife in danger. They emphasized the need for water withdrawal legislation and more studies on the effects of drilling, adding that a number of permits are already waiting for the approval of hydro-fracturing in the state.

Also present at the meeting were representatives of Audubon Pennsylvania, who cited mistakes made in Pennsylvania and also

Membership

To join, send a \$20 check payable to
National Audubon Society to:

Della Wells, RAS Membership Chair
9 Dunderberg Road
Tomkins Cove, NY 10986-1003

Allow 4 to 8 weeks for delivery of
Audubon Magazine and The
Observer.

The Observer

Editing: Caroline McDonald
Graphics: Elyse Fuller
Copyediting: Alan Wells, Della Wells

Newsletter Submissions Welcome!
Please send your contributions for
The Observer to Caroline McDonald
at carolinem38a@yahoo.com. The
editor reserves the right to edit any
copy for clarity, accuracy and space
requirements. The next *Observer*
deadline is **March 15, 2011**.

When reprinting, please credit the
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Rockland Audubon Society.

President's Message

Do you have a talent you are willing to share? I can suggest several ways you can contribute your knowledge, experiences and more—by volunteering with Rockland Audubon Society (RAS).

There are many ways you can share your talents. For example, do you enjoy spending time outdoors with family and friends? If so, consider leading a field trip or nature walk for RAS. Your walk doesn't have to be scientific or authoritative. In fact, it could be a stroll along your favorite path, with your own focus on nature. Particularly, we are seeking volunteers who can involve more families and youth.

Are you good with words or photography? Consider contributing an article, poem, anecdote, or photo for publication in *The Observer*. Your unique perspective and experiences would be a valuable addition to our newsletter.

Do you have talents for communication and public speaking? We are looking for volunteers to present our nature programs to audiences such as library patrons, youth groups, senior citizens, and the general public. RAS has developed several excellent programs that are ready to be shared.

Would you like to get involved in a meaningful project? You can join a team for our Birdathon in May or participate in next December's Christmas Bird Count.

Are you hard-pressed for time but

stressed the importance of having adequate regulation in place before well drilling is approved.

According to Audubon New York (ANY), the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) relies on existing regulations to mitigate almost all of the likely adverse effects. ANY said, however, that it "strongly believes the existing drilling regulations are too weak," and must be improved upon those proposed in the DEC's draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement. ANY has stated that New York--and the DEC in particular--does not have enough trained, competent experts to oversee such a large and complicated project. Each horizontally drilled well, it said, will use at least one million gallons of water to bring the natural gas to the surface. Multiplied by eight wells per pad, potentially one pad every square mile and 1,000 to 2,000 permits issued each year and "this will consume and pollute a vast amount of water over a very large landscape.

In December 2010, New York Gov. David Paterson issued an Executive Order calling for a temporary timeout on high volume hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling for natural gas through July 1, 2011. The Executive Order, however, places a timeout only on horizontal wells.

New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a 2010 report, "Power NY: The New NY Agenda," written before his inauguration: "We need to explore how drilling can be done in a way that is consistent with environmental concerns. The State's Department of Environmental Conservation, as well as the federal Environmental Protection Agency, are currently studying the effects of drilling in the Marcellus Shale region. Through that assessment, New York State must ensure that, if and when the Shale's natural gas is obtained, it does not come at the expense of human health or have adverse environmental impacts. He continued, "In particular, it is critical that no drilling be conducted that might negatively affect any existing watershed and that best practices in drilling are adopted and enforced by the State. Therefore, any drilling in the Marcellus Shale must be environmentally sensitive and safe. These reviews must demonstrate that health and environmental risks are adequately addressed and protected. While the direction Gov. Cuomo takes on this issue remains to be seen, fracking in New York is a given, as land leases are already being procured, panel experts said. Currently, the state has an opportunity to examine the issue and circumvent problems seen in other states, they concluded.

ANY said in its statement, co-moved, and seconded by the 27 Chapters of the Audubon Council of New York State, that it urges the State to "delay this rush to drilling so these critical issues facing birds, other wildlife, their habitats and our communities can be worked out, and better, more stringent regulations can be developed. It noted that the dSGEIS dismisses alternatives to the project in favor of pressing ahead, despite deficiencies in the current regulatory and monitoring framework. The DEC, ANY said, does not believe it has the authority to say 'no' to this project, which has such statewide adverse implications. The agency does not want to phase it in over time or by area and does not want to wait until better 'green' technology is developed. "We cannot accept any of these dismissive statements as final and the DEC and the State must not ignore a fourth option -- that is to delay, to wait until the State has better regulations and better technology in place." The gas will still be there, ANY concluded.

The Atlantic Flyway Initiative: Audubon's Campaign to Conserve Birds and Habitat

By Stephanie Garber, RAS Board of Directors

The Eastern Seaboard, stretching from the Canadian border to the tip of Florida, has some of the most productive ecosystems and most diverse birdlife on the continent. Over the years, however, birds and other wildlife, and entire ecosystems, have been substantially affected by the human impacts of farming, timber harvesting, fisheries, urban development, sprawl and recreation. Expanding development and the effects of climate change continue to threaten these ecosystems. To

still want to volunteer? You can contribute in other ways, by bringing refreshments to a monthly program, or donating a nature-related item—such as a bird feeder or field guide—as a raffle prize, for starters.

You may have other ideas how your talents will best serve RAS. But regardless of what you can offer, we would like to hear from you at 845-639-9216. However you choose to get involved, please know that your contributions would be greatly appreciated and would only enhance RAS—an organization run entirely by volunteers.

Yours truly,
Elyse Fuller

Don't Miss Any Future Observers !

We have been saying it for months, but now it's really happening! Rockland Audubon Society has transitioned to a more sustainable newsletter form. Don't miss an issue! If you have not already done so, be sure to sign up for the electronic newsletter list by e-mailing Alan Wells at awells@bestweb.net.

Special Lectures:

"Birding by Ear" with Lorrie Pallant,
RAS Education Chair

Thursday, March 15, 2011, 7 p.m.
at Suffern Library

Wednesday, April 13, 2011, 7 p.m.
at Nyack Library

Upcoming Programs

Historical Society of Rockland County
20 Zukor Road
New City, NY 10956

Doors open at 7 p.m. for
refreshments.
Program starts at 7:30 p.m.

FEB 4, 2011: Have You Seen a Bluebird Lately?

Once common in Rockland County, the Eastern Bluebird population has declined as fields and farmlands have been lost to development and reforestation. In 2010, Rockland Audubon Society launched its Nest Box Trail with the goal of enhancing habitat for bluebirds, kestrels, and other cavity-nesters. **Elyse and Tom Fuller** will discuss the project's successes and challenges and ways to improve backyard habitat. A limited number of bluebird nest boxes will be available for purchase with proceeds supporting the RAS Nest Box Trail. Pre-ordering kits (\$25 each) is appreciated. Please call the RAS

conserve birds and habitat at a hemispheric scale, the Atlantic Flyway Initiative is a campaign launched by the National Audubon Society.

The Atlantic Flyway can be described as a super-highway in the sky where hundreds of species of birds migrate in a season between South America and Canada. There are thousands of exits along the Flyway, with natural habitat providing birds with either a suitable breeding ground or a place to rest and refuel before continuing on the next leg of their migratory journey.

The Eastern Seaboard is so densely populated, however, that we are constantly competing for space in the same habitats required by a startling diversity of bird species. Accelerated natural processes, human activity and global warming will dramatically alter the ever-changing shape of the Atlantic coastline. Left unchecked, our diverse eastern forests will undergo marked transformations with species disappearing, unable to adapt to dramatic changes in temperature, rainfall, seasonal cycles and the severity of storms. These species will most likely be replaced with more aggressive, adaptable non-native plants and animals.

In response to the threats and challenges of habitat destruction, pollution, climate change and population growth, Audubon's strategic conservation plan targets specific bird habitats within forests, salt marshes, barrier islands and on coastal beaches. Each of these habitats faces different threats and requires diverse solutions. Some of Audubon's innovative strategies include working closely with private and public landowners to improve forest habitat, restore high salt marshes in coastal wetlands and initiate social marketing to change human behavior in beach communities. These habitats are united by Audubon's focus on Important Bird Areas—sites identified as the most critical to sustain breeding, wintering and migrating populations of birds.

Eastern forests provide habitat for many birds of eastern North America and shelter 75 percent of the neo-tropical migrants using the Atlantic Flyway—those that spend part of the year in the American tropics. These forests are critical to controlling climate change through the absorption of carbon dioxide emissions as well as enhancing air and water quality. Audubon's priority is to identify and maintain breeding populations as well as identify and enhance stopover sites. Expansion of Audubon's Forest Stewardship Program is an essential strategy for protecting those forests which shelter birds such as the Wood thrush and Blackburnian warbler. These are biome-restricted species, whose entire (global) breeding distribution lies entirely or mostly within the defined boundaries of the biome, such as the deciduous forest. Audubon is working closely with its partners from Birdlife International to identify and implement complementary conservation strategies at the highest priority international migratory sites along the Atlantic Flyway.

Salt marsh habitats are an essential component of coastal estuaries. They provide vital stopover and nesting areas to many at-risk species. Rich in biodiversity, these wetlands are home to unique flora and fauna. They are critical for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other birds that feed in salt marshes during their annual migration from as far away as the Arctic tundra and the South American pampas. Important to human communities, these salt marshes act as filters for nutrients and pollutants and provide a first line of defense against rising sea levels and increased storm damage. Audubon is taking action to protect and/or restore priority salt marshes—especially high marshes with threatened habitats that are essential to sustaining populations of Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow and Black Rail. Action will also be taken to advance the addition of the Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow to the Federal Endangered Species List.

Coastal habitats, beaches and barrier islands, are essential to many shorebirds and water birds. They use a succession of coastal habitats, including the adjacent inlets, shoals and mudflats from Canada to the shores of Argentina during their annual breeding and migratory cycle. Due to the high demand for access to beaches by humans, however, the coastal habitat has increased environmental degradation and disturbance during the seasons birds most depend on it for nesting and feeding. Audubon's program, "Share the Beach," has shown that conservation and recreation can successfully co-exist. This program combines public outreach efforts to boaters and beach-goers alike, with expanded hands-

hotline at 845-639-9216 to reserve your boxes!

MAR 4, 2011: Northern Saw-whet Owl: Elusive Predator in Our Backyards

Naturalists **Trudy Battaly and Drew Panko** will share their knowledge of the Northern Saw-whet Owl, based on four years of studies and will relate some interesting encounters with these wonderful creatures. The Saw-whet is one of the most common and widespread of North American Owl species. It is also the smallest owl in the Northeast and a master at camouflage, so few people have actually seen one.

APR 1, 2011: Join us for an exciting program TBA!

14th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count--Feb. 18-21

Join tens of thousands of citizen scientists, who will count birds for the 14th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC). The GBBC is designed so that people can contribute to an important project and at the same time connect with nature and learn about birds. Participants may count birds anywhere in the U.S. and Canada—even in their own backyards. So save the date, **February 18 through 21, 2011.** To participate or to enter bird count data, please visit www.birdcount.org.

Audubon Council of New York State Meets in Ithaca

Did you know that 29 states have Audubon chapters, and that New York State, itself, has 27 chapters? These chapters are members of the Audubon Council of New York State, which has a Board of Directors elected annually by the member chapters. Audubon New York (ANY), the state office of National Audubon Society, lists on its website 50,000 members and a Nature Center network and sanctuary system. Rockland Audubon Society (RAS) has about 750 members.

That is a lot of New Yorkers interested in birds and wildlife.

Twice a year ANY staff members and ACNYS chapter delegates meet to discuss conservation issues, legislative initiatives, and to attend workshops and share successes and challenges.

The Fall 2010 ACNYS meeting was Nov. 5-7 in Ithaca, NY. Representatives from 21 New York Chapters (RAS sent five attendees),

on beach stewardship. This has included erecting symbolic fencing and predator "exclosures" to protect nesting areas, reduce threats and improve conditions to coastal Important Bird Areas.

The Urban Oasis Program was originally launched in Florida, where vast amounts of land were converted for residential development and agriculture. The program was created to help migrating birds moving down the coast to the Caribbean or across the Gulf of Mexico to their wintering sites in Mexico, Central and South America. This program has expanded to focus on parts of the Atlantic Flyway, where all that remains to support migrating birds are botanical gardens, urban parks and small patches of forested land. Planting schemes and landscape restoration plans are being designed and implemented to improve and increase this critical stopover habitat.

We can all help to protect and steward the critical habitats that support hemispheric bird populations by getting involved on a grassroots level in our own communities to implement local conservation initiatives. These local measures are becoming more and more crucial and for global impact.

For more information about Audubon's Atlantic Flyway Initiative and Important Bird Areas program, check out:

<http://www.audubon.org/sites/default/files/documents/16-21R.pdf>

<http://web4.audubon.org/bird/iba/>

References:

National Audubon Society. 2010. "The Atlantic Flyway Initiative, Conserving Eastern Forests, Coastal and Saltmarsh Habitat for Birds, Wildlife and People."

Audubon New York. 2010. "Atlantic Flyway Initiative"

Children & Nature: An Ancient Bond Broken

By Joanna Galdone, RAS Board of Directors

As a member of the Baby Boomer generation I am increasingly motivated to find ways to pass on to younger people the legacy of what it means to be human, especially in our connection with nature. Looking back at my own childhood, I was lucky to have been given the freedom to explore the outdoors. There I could hide in my grandmother's lilacs, climb high in the trees, sit in the tall grass while feeling the cold wind blow over me, get to know the call of a young crow, observe butterflies and tadpoles and feel minnows tickling my toes. A childhood like my own, however, is becoming increasingly rare.

This is a critical time in human history, because never before have so many children been cut off from the natural world. Hopefully our generation can resolve to help bring the joys of nature to the children in our lives!

The work of author Richard Louv—a recipient of the 2008 Audubon Medal and co-founder of the Children & Nature Network—is especially relevant during these times. Louv said in a video: "Do you still carry a place from your childhood in your heart? A hidden corner of your grandmother's garden, a clearing in the woods, a tree fort or a stream filled with tadpoles and fish? Those fortunate enough to experience nature as children are likely to cherish those memories for the rest of their lives! But millions of children living in America today may never have the chance to create those memories. Fear of strangers and changes in our lifestyles are keeping our children indoors." This trend is something that alarms Louv, whose book, *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder* has become a bestseller. His work has touched a nerve with people who realize the ancient bond between children and nature has been broken. Louv explained that for all of human history and human prehistory, "Children in their formative years have been going outside and spending much of their time either playing or working in nature. All of human history, and prehistory! Within a matter of two or three decades we are seeing the possible virtual disappearance of that kind of activity among kids. So, it's in us, it's part of us. We're genetically wired to need nature." Beyond that, he said, is the sense of

five Pennsylvania chapters, and board and staff members from both the ANY and Audubon Pennsylvania state offices were present at the meeting.

The spring 2011 ACNYS meeting is scheduled for March 25-27 in Saratoga Springs, NY.

Audubon New York's Gas Drilling Recommendations

Audubon New York has identified 136 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) across the state, using internationally accepted criteria, that represent the most important habitats for birds of conservation concern in the state. Of these 136, 40 IBAs are in the area that would be potentially impacted by drilling in Marcellus shale region, including some of the best remaining unfragmented forests of the state—critical for successful reproduction of forest-breeding birds.

To ensure that important natural resources are protected from expanded natural gas drilling, ANY strongly urges the passage of comprehensive legislation, or development of stronger regulations that include the following important provisions:

- Put priority wildlife habitats off limits to drilling
- Reduce forest fragmentation
- Contain “flowback” water in covered tanks
- Cumulative impacts must be seriously considered
- Protect all water sources equally
- Mitigation funding must be required

Upcoming RAS Field Trips

FEB 5 (Sat)—Hook Mountain Hike.

Meet Vince Plogar at 9 a.m. at Landing Road near the Rockland Lake firehouse. Hike the Long Path above the Hudson to see what is around—possibly flocks of winter finches. 845-596-8924

FEB 6 (Sun)—First Sunday Walk at Kakiat Park.

Meet Veronika Krause at 8 a.m. at the parking lot off Rte. 202, opposite Viola School. Over by 10 a.m. 845-359-9294

FEB 11 (Fri)—Owl Prowl at Stony Point Battlefield.

Meet Della & Alan Wells at 7:30 p.m. at the main parking lot at the end of Battlefield Rd. Access from Park Rd., off Rte. 9W, Stony Point. Search for resident Great Horned and Eastern Screech Owls. 845-942-5751 or Battlefield office, 845-786-2521.

wonder, which is “probably the most important word in *Last Child in the Woods*. That moment when you were three or four and went out into the backyard and maybe crawled out into the weeds and found a rock and turned it over and found that you are not alone in the Universe! That moment of wonder is the source of all spiritual growth. How can we cut that off? How can we cut children off from that source of wonder? And we're in danger of doing that!"

Scientific studies are verifying Louv's assertion that contact with nature is not just a luxury, but is essential to healthy child development. Louv continues, "Some of these studies show, for instance, that kids with symptoms of attention deficit disorder get much better with just a little bit of contact with nature. Studies of creativity show that kids who play in natural areas versus the flat asphalt or turf playgrounds play more creatively and the leaders that emerge tend to be the smartest kids. Studies in stress reduction in both adults and kids show dramatic results from just getting out in nature."

If our response to nature is instinctual and an essential part of what it means to be human, what is keeping us from allowing our children outdoors? The answer, Louv believes, is fear. He explained, "While parents talk of course of being too busy and about electronic distractions and video games and television, when you really get to it, what parents talk about more than anything is fear—of strangers of people. That's why they don't want their kids going outdoors. Now the irony is that the actual threat of stranger-danger, of child abduction is a fraction of what people think it actually is. And it's been going down for the last decade. But the fear is real." He continued, "Yes, there is risk outdoors from strangers, but not as much as we think. Yes, there is risk from nature itself. But there is also a huge risk in raising a generation under virtual house arrest. Risk to their spirit, risk to their sense of connection to the Earth, their sense of place, their sense of community. There's a risk to their bodies in terms of childhood obesity to their future health. That's a huge risk! We can't allow that to happen. We can't be the last generation that has had the healthy full human engagement in the world we were given."

Resources on helping children connect with nature:

www.richardlouv.com

www.beoutthere.org

www.education.audubon.org

Notes & Sightings – September-November 2010

Compiled by Carol Weiss, RAS Field Trip Leader & CBC Coordinator

For birdwatchers in Rockland County, autumn is nearly as exciting a season as spring. Not only do we have the expected southern migration of warblers, flycatchers and others of our summer birds, but we have two important hawk watches at Bear Mountain and Hook Mountain, along with the Hudson River and a string of large lakes that attract shorebirds and waterfowl. Here are some of the many memorable fall sightings submitted for 2010:

Sep 18—First Dark-eyed Junco of the season seen on the Long Path as RAS members, led by Jim Previdi, headed to the hawk watch on Hook Mountain. Jim Previdi —After the RAS group left I stayed until 5:00 p.m. and counted an additional three Northern Harriers. I did not count an immature Bald Eagle that I saw head north/northwest, nor did I count an adult Bald Eagle that chased down and stole a fish from an Osprey—nor did I count the Osprey. Carl Howard

An aside—The Hook Mountain Hawk Watch posted three new records this year. For total species count, 142 Bald Eagles (previous high 125 in 2009); 294 Cooper's Hawks (284 in 2005), and 55 Black Vultures (46 in 2007).

Sep 22—Tuesday at my feeder in Pearl River: six woodpecker species. The common five, plus a Red-headed. All within 17 minutes! A Red-breasted Nuthatch stopped at for suet and a Carolina Wren was singing too. Monday night I had a Screech Owl calling. Chris Healy

FEB 13 (Sun)—Rockland Lake State Park.

Meet Della & Alan Wells at 9 a.m. at the flagpole in the North Pool parking lot—look for late wintering ducks. Great for beginners. Over by 11:30 a.m. 845-942-5751

FEB 20 (Sun)—Croton Point Park.

Meet Carol Weiss at 8 a.m. at the Commuter Parking Lot, Rte. 303 N., West Nyack, for carpooling. Look for wintering birds and possible rarities on the Westchester side of the Hudson. 845-358-3659

MAR 6 (Sun)—First Sunday Walk at Kakiat Park.

Meet Carol Weiss at 8 a.m. at the parking lot off Rt. 202 opposite Viola School. Stroll through the meadows and woods looking for wintering birds. Over by 10 a.m. 845-358-3659

MAR 12 (Sat)—Woodcocks at Kakiat Park.

Meet Della & Alan Wells at 6:30 p.m. at the Kakiat parking lot, Rte. 202, opposite Viola Elementary School, Suffern. Bring a flashlight. 845-942-5751

APR 3 (Sun)—First Sunday Walk at Kakiat Park.

Meet Veronika Krause at 8 a.m. at the parking lot off Rt. 202 opposite Viola School. Over by 10 a.m. 845-359-9294

APR 4 (Mon)—A Weekday Walk at Piermont Pier.

Meet Elyse Fuller at 9 a.m. at the ball field parking lot at the Piermont Pier entrance. Over by 11 a.m. 845-351-2893

APR 10 (Sun)—Celery Farm, Allendale, NJ.

Meet Alan & Della Wells at 9 a.m. at the Celery Farm parking lot on Franklin Turnpike, Allendale, NJ. May be wet underfoot. Look for waterfowl and very early spring migrants. Over by 11 a.m. 845-942-5751

APR 17 (Sun)—Spring Stroll at Mt. Ivy Swamp.

Meet Veronika Krause at 10 a.m. at Pomona Middle School parking lot on Pomona Rd. Look for Marsh Marigolds and Chipping Sparrows along the railroad embankment. Over by noon. 845-359-9294

APR 18 (Mon)—Weekday Walk at the Celery Farm.

Meet Elyse Fuller at 9 a.m. at the Celery Farm parking lot on Franklin Turnpike, Allendale, NJ. Over by 11 a.m. 845-351-2893

Sep 26—I hiked up Hook Mtn. There were several other birding groups there, must have been 50 people or so. Here are the birds spotted while I was there (11:45 a.m.-1:00 p.m.): one adult Bald Eagle; two Cooper's Hawks, one Sharp-shinned Hawk; at least 12 Black Vultures; and one Common Raven. The group also spotted a Black-throated Green Warbler and a Northern Parula in a nearby tree. Also seen were Black-capped Chickadees and Dark-eyed Juncos. Caroline McDonald

Oct 2—Chris Healy found his life Pied-billed Grebe at Lake Tappan, Blauvelt Road section.

Oct 3—Kakiat Park field trip: 20-24 Purple Finches were eating juniper berries, observed by more than a dozen RAS members. It was the largest number of Purple Finches in one location that most in the group had ever seen.

Oct 8—On my way to work about 8:15 a.m., I saw two Bald Eagles in the same tree on Rte. 9W Northbound at Bear Mountain. Heading north, they were in the area where the two lanes merge back to one, on the left side. Previously there was only saw a lone eagle, but this week there were two, in the same tree. Possibly a nest in the future? Helen Russell

Oct 9—Piermont Pier ball field: Least Sandpiper, Vesper Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Blackpoll Warbler along with many Yellow-rumped Warblers and one or two Palm Warblers. Two Indigo Buntings and two American Pipits were a real bonus. Carol Weiss

Oct 12—Piermont Pier: An immature White-crowned Sparrow seen behind the leaf mulch piles at the ball field. Carol Weiss

Oct 17—Late this morning I got a report from RAS members Lindsey Konkel and Scott Neabore that they had seen a drake Eurasian Wigeon at Rockland Lake State Park the previous morning (16-Oct-2010). They had observed and photographed the bird in a small pond just across the road from the north parking lot (41.1499 N -73.9223 W). The Eurasian Wigeon was in the company of a mixed group of Mallard, Gadwall, and a few American Wigeon. Five RAS members, including myself, confirmed the sighting this afternoon around 1 p.m., in the same pond as reported by Lindsey and Scott. We watched and photographed the bird for about 10 minutes. As we were leaving it took flight and appeared to be heading for the NW corner of Rockland Lake (near the fishing station, 41.1434 N - 73.9261 W). AlanWells

Another aside –The Eurasian Wigeon stayed throughout the period, and was seen on Dec. 3.

Oct 22—Eurasian Wigeon with Gadwalls and American Wigeon at Rockland Lake—small ice cutting pond; four White-crowned Sparrows, three Pied-billed Grebes, many Yellow-rumps, one Palm Warbler, one Blackpoll Warbler. Carol Weiss

Oct 23—Piermont Pier: Greater Yellowlegs, Common Yellowthroat, 50+ Yellow-rump Warblers, 10 Swamp Sparrows, Marsh Wren, several Golden-crowned and Ruby-crowned Kinglets—in the phragmites—down low, Blue-headed Vireo and 20 Ruddy Ducks. Carol Weiss

Oct 26—Confirm that Jack and I saw a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher twice recently. Around October 10 and 16. Both were spotted in the back yard (South Nyack). Belinda Cash

Oct 31—A Halloween surprise at Rockland Lake. On the dock at the fishing station a Common Moorhen stood for about 30 seconds, then headed for the lily pads. We searched the south end of the lake for the Eurasian Wigeon, but didn't find it. The light was too poor to make out details of distant ducks. Alan Wells

From the Hook Mountain Hawk Watch, Trudy Battaly reported:

October was a very exciting time for the Hook Mountain hawk watch.

Oct 10—Matt Tozer started it all with a Short-eared Owl flying at the fake owl and then tussling with a Red-tailed Hawk.

APR 23 (Sat)—Spring Bird Walk at Stony Point Battlefield.

Meet Della & Alan Wells at 8 a.m., at the main parking lot at the end of Battlefield Rd. Access from Park Rd., off Rte. 9W in Stony Point. Stroll through this historic site on the Hudson and search the woodlands for spring neo-tropical migrants. Over about 10:30 a.m. 845-942-5751 or Battlefield office, 845-786-2521

APR 24 (Sun)—Doodletown for Early Migrants.

Meet Carol Weiss at 7 a.m. at the pull-off on Rte. 9W just north of the Iona Island causeway, south of Bear Mountain. First warblers of spring! Some uphill walking. Bring snack, over by noon. 845-358-3659

RAS Welcomes New and Returning Members!

Janet F. Anderson, Erik Anestad, Linda S. Arroya, P.T. Beek, Kathleen Breen, Emma Clerihew, Loren D. Costa, Murray Cohen, Holly Corey, Lucy Cruz, Orlando Delvalle, Dennis Deredita, Nancy & Mick Eagle, David Eichenholtz, Del Esposito, Tom Fallon, Jonah Friedberg, Spiro Gallousis, Marilyn Gambardella, Thomas N. Glover, Phyllis Goldberg, Marilyn Goldzweig, Laura Hagen, Julian Harvey, Christine Haviaris, Chris Healy, Joseph Hoffman, Sandra Klein, Will & Maggie Kyle, Lydis T. Michaelides, Noemi Morales; Stuart Moss, Cornelia Muller, Joanna Niebanck, Laura Overton, John E. Page, Laurie Peek, Martha Phillips, Joanne Potanavic, Madeline Quinn, Neil C. Robinson, Johanna M. Rodgers, Alexandra F. Rottman, Beau Rottman, Osvaldo Santana, Corinne Sarian, Phoebe & Francis Senn, C. Simmons, Sisters of Christian Doctrine, Stephanie Skorka, Jeff Solomon, Maureen & Alan Strongin, C. Thomas-Englert, Ann M. Vanness, Mary Vail, John Woods, Douglas Wright, Frances Yeransian

Oct 17—Mary Normandia sighted a dark phase Rough-legged Hawk to the north, flying down the river towards Hook Mtn.

Oct 20—Steve Sachs sighted another Rough-legged Hawk—light phase—the second of the year. Remarkable since last year's Rough-legged was the first since 1991, and now two within three days.

Oct 23—Danielle Gustafson counted our first Golden Eagle of the year.

Oct 24—Tom Fiore recorded our first Northern Goshawk of the season.

Oct 25—Carol Weiss counted our second Northern Goshawk of the year. Please see <http://www.battaly.com/hook/> for more information about the hawk watch. The numbers and a highlight summary have been posted.

Nov 1-10—Snow Buntings atop Hook Mtn. at dawn. One, two and three seen during the day. John Beccarelli

Nov 2—Election Day: Eastern end of Piermont pier, a small flock of 12 Snow Buntings volleyed from the north side to gravel and stubble grass on the south side, where they feverishly pecked at the ground for all of six minutes before being whisked off. I hope they remember the way back! After a long winter I will relish their feathery madness heralding the advent of spring. John Deans

Nov 3—Three American Pipits with 35 Mourning Doves on the lawn at Rockland Lake South, parking lot 5. Carol Weiss

Nov 3—A highlight of several hawk watchers: four Golden Eagles—all sub-adults—flew by the Bear Mtn. hawk watch within a 10-15 minute period, around 2:30 p.m. Joe Scordato & others

Nov 5—Walking Bowline Park I came upon a flock of about 10 Snow Buntings. I hope this doesn't mean snow is coming. Bonnie Koop

Nov 5—I was delighted to see just one Pine Siskin at my thistle feeder (Stony Point). It stayed briefly. Doris Metraux

Nov 11—This afternoon there was a Great Blue Heron by the Spring Valley Memorial Park pond. I've seen egrets there but never a Great Blue. Marianne Leese

Nov 12—A leisurely walk around Rockland Lake turned up an unexpected bird: In the weedy field between the north swimming pool and the nature center, I flushed an Eastern Meadowlark. It flew up only a few feet, beating its wings stiffly, and landed about 30 feet away, showing the yellow breast, and disappearing into the grasses. I did not find the Eurasian Wigeon but counted eight American Wigeon. Two Green-winged Teal were hiding along the southern shore. In Orange County an Osprey over Silvermine Lake was observed by three kayakers/RAS members. Carol Weiss

Nov 28—Alan and Della Wells looked for Canvasback Ducks along the Hudson River shoreline and found 500-600 in a small cove in Grassy Point.

Finally—While not a Rockland sighting, on Sept. 19 around 4:30 p.m., at the Paramus Fairway (Rte. 17 at the Fashion Center in New Jersey) I spotted two Common Nighthawks flying above the parking lot—which turned out to be 15-20 Nighthawks just above the trees, apparently hunting/foraging. A spectacular sight and definitely one of my best bird moments. Linda Pistolesi

Keep those observations coming—your detailed sightings and marvelous descriptions make this column exciting. Please continue to send them to Carol at cweiss1124@optonline.net or call her at 845-358-3659.