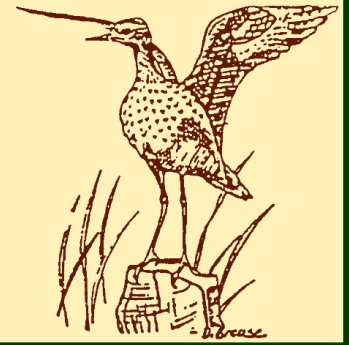


The Upland Plover

Newsletter of the North Country Bird Club, Inc. Since 1948
January-February 2023 Volume 64 No.1



2023 MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE NOW DUE

PLEASE FILL OUT THE INCLUDED FORM SOON AND FORWARD IT WITH YOUR DUES

SPRING MEETINGS

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10

All Meetings at 7:00 PM

Stone Presbyterian Church
140 Chestnut St, Watertown

FIELD TRIPS - 2023 SEASON

St. Lawrence River Parks: Saturday, April 22 - 8:30 am

Southwicks Beach: Saturday, May 6 - 8:30 am

Red Lake: Saturday, May 20 - 8:30 am

Limerick Cedars: Wednesday, June 7 - 8:00 pm

Marlowe Camp, Beartown: Saturday, June 17 - 8:30 am

Annual Picnic (Brouse Preserve): Sunday, July 9 - 1:00 pm

Perch River WMA: Saturday, August 26 - 8:30 am

Montezuma NWR: Saturday, October 21 - 8:30 am

We meet for all field trips, except the Limerick Cedars evening trip and the Annual Picnic, at 8:30 am in the parking lot of the Arsenal St Wal-Mart, across the entry drive from Red Lobster.

THE ZOO PROJECT

The Club is partnering with Zoo New York to take the joy of birding to children, young people, and adults who are not yet a part of the community of birders. The Zoo reaches many people in our region with whom we have no direct way of establishing contact. This is an exciting opportunity for us.

We have donated a set of feeders and guides which will enable visitors to the Zoo to view and learn about the birds of our area. The Club also plans to assist the Zoo in presenting a series of programs and field experiences.

We are establishing a fund to help cover the costs of this ongoing program. If you wish to contribute, please send your donation made out to North Country Bird Club, PO Box 634, Watertown, NY 13601, and marked "Zoo Project."

REMEMBER TO JOIN US FOR THE MARCH MEETING

Wednesday, March 8

7:00 pm at Stone Presbyterian Church
140 Chestnut St, Watertown

GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT

As another North Country winter drags on, be sure to take advantage of a great opportunity to lift your spirits through birding. Join the Audubon Society's Great Backyard Bird Count, to be held on Friday, February 11 through Monday, February 14. Help the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society learn more about how to protect birds and the environment. For more info and to participate, go to GreatBackyardBirdCount



**WHITE-CROWNED
SPARROW**

Three Mile Bay
December 28, 2022

Photo by
Lynn Chavoustie

SPRING BIRD CENSUS

Again this year, seeking to create a more complete picture of the great variety of birds which can be seen in our area, the Club will conduct a Spring Bird Census, an effort to survey the bird life in our area during the spring season. All birders are invited to participate. The Census will extend from Sunday, March 20 through Monday, June 20. The Census Survey Form and details will be included in the next issue.

PROJECT FEEDERWATCH

Cornell Lab's **Project FeederWatch** extends from November to early April each year. Anyone interested in birds can participate. This year's FeederWatch season continues through Sunday, April 30. You may sign up and begin counting at any time during the season. There is an \$18 annual participation fee to cover materials, staff support, and data analysis. For more info or to join:

[Project FeederWatch](http://ProjectFeederWatch)

OFFICERS

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**On The Web:
NORTH COUNTRY
BIRD CLUB
ON FACEBOOK**

For detailed info about birds,
visit the website of
the Cornell Ornithology Lab:
[Cornell Lab](#)

Track **bird migrations** at the Cornell Lab's [Cornell Birdcast](#) Maps show patterns of migration across the United States. Regional forecasts of migration dates are given for individual species.

Access the Cornell Lab's Birdcams to watch a variety of birds nesting and feeding, and to view the feeders at the Lab:
[Cornell Lab Birdcams](#)

eBird Essentials is a free online course which shows you how to use the eBird app to record and submit sightings. Access the course at:

[Cornell Lab Academy - Courses](#)

FIELD TRIP: ST. LAWRENCE RIVER PARKS

Saturday, April 9 - Meet at Arsenal St Wal-Mart at 8:30 am

We will visit state parks along the St. Lawrence River, as well as other birding sites in northern Jefferson County, to observe migrating waterfowl and arriving songbirds. This is a driving tour, with only minimal walking involved. Lunch at an area restaurant will follow.

NORTH COUNTRY BIRD CLUB SIGHTINGS

Please forward notable sightings for the next issue by February 15 (contact info on page 6).

While submissions of sightings have been plentiful, especially for the winter season, we have received only one report of that bird which has become virtually symbolic of winter in the North Country, the Snowy Owl. It was reported on November 18 that Dick Brouse had sighted a Snowy along Old Town Springs Rd near Chaumont. No other reports of the species have been received.

Dick also reported another especially notable sighting, finding an American Avocet at Sherwin's Bay on Pillar Point on November 11. Several other Club members subsequently saw the beautiful shorebird during its stay in the marsh on the inland side of the road there.

Robin Booth has had especially good birding in the Cape Vincent area this fall. In late October at a favorite site along Sam Adams Rd, she reported sighting a Hermit Thrush, 2 Eastern Bluebirds, Red-bellied Woodpeckers (including a juvenile), a Pileated Woodpecker, both Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, 5 American Robins, 2 Common Ravens, a Red-tailed Hawk, and 5 Wild Turkeys. On November 19, Robin saw 5 Red-winged Blackbirds there, as well as 3 American Goldfinches, 5 American Tree Sparrows, 3 House Finches, and an American Robin. On every weekend in November and early December, her sightings there included 2 White-breasted Nuthatches, 10+ Dark-eyed Juncos, a Red-bellied Woodpecker, Northern Cardinals, 4+ Black-capped Chickadees, 5+ Blue Jays, and 10+ Mourning Doves.

On November 19, at her home in the Village of Cape Vincent, Robin saw Dark-eyed Juncos, a Downy Woodpecker, a White-breasted Nuthatch, House

Birdwatcher's Digest, long a favorite resource for birders, has resumed publication. The magazine is available in both print and digital format. To subscribe, go to [BirdwatchersDigest](#)

A beautiful set of bird-themed notecards is given to a member of the Club by random selection each time the *Plover* is issued, to provide an incentive to keep memberships current. We offer congratulations to this issue's recipient, Sally Woodell Stevens of Ellisburg.

Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, and Blue Jays. On November 27, she was visited there by a Tufted Titmouse, and on December 19 by an American Tree Sparrow.

On November 15, Robin sighted a Great Blue Heron in Chaumont. Peggy Coe reported on November 16 that many Blue Jays and Northern Cardinals were still visiting her home in Watertown. On November 18, Robin saw 20+ Snow Buntings on Branche Rd, then 40+ more on Mason Rd, along with 5 Horned Larks. The next day, she sighted 37 Snow Buntings and 14 Horned Larks on Branche Rd, along with a Red-tailed Hawk and a Northern Harrier. On November 24, Robin found Long-tailed Ducks, Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, Bufflehead, and many Mallards on the St. Lawrence River in Cape Vincent.

Sightings of Snow Geese have not been common this year. On November 24, Connie Mason saw 5 Snow Geese near Limerick. On November 26, Kathy Killeen and Corky Marlowe sighted 15+ Snow Geese at Westcott's Beach State Park. On December 3, Kathy, Corky, and Ellen Darabaner visited Thompson Park and saw only a few American Crows due to high winds. *(continued on page 4)*



AMERICAN AVOCET

Sherwins Bay November 11, 2022

Photo by Brian Miller

TREASURER'S REPORT - Dec 31, 2022

Checking acct balance	\$2380.42
Savings acct balance.....	\$1936.37

Kathleen Killeen, Treasurer

INFORMATION SOURCES FOR REGIONAL SIGHTINGS AND RARE BIRD ALERTS

A list of **birding listserves** and of sites issuing **rare bird alerts** for New York is available from the New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA) at [NYSOA Sightings](#). Note especially eBird Alerts, Oneidabirds, Cayugabirds-L, and Northern_NY_Birds. Oneidabirds reports sightings from the Syracuse area and the Montezuma region, and some sightings from our area. Cayugabirds-L reports sightings from the Montezuma region as well, and from the eastern Finger Lakes region. Northern_NY_Birds reports sightings mainly from the Adirondacks and the Champlain Valley.

AUDUBON CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT 2022

On Saturday, December 17, Audubon's Christmas Bird Count was conducted in the Watertown Circle by the North Country Bird Club, in association with the Onondaga Chapter of the Audubon Society. This was the Society's 123rd Christmas Bird Count and the 85th year the Count has been conducted in the local circle. 20 Club members participated in the Watertown Circle Count, in which 14 birders in the field and 9 feeder watchers surveyed bird species within the Circle. The field parties spent a total of 21 hours birding by car, covering 315½ miles, and 3½ hours birding on foot, covering 4 miles. Feeder watchers counted for a total of 29 hours. Three species - Northern Shrike, Purple Finch, and Common Redpoll - were seen only by feeder watchers.



GREAT BLUE HERON

Morris Tract Rd December 17, 2022

Photo by Lynn Chavoustie

Records are readily accessible to the Compiler for the sixteen previous Watertown Circle Counts (so since 2006). One species was sighted this year which was not recorded on the Watertown Count during those years: Evening Grosbeak. 52 species were recorded during this year's Count, down from 60 species last year, and lower than the average of 54 over the past 17 years (the highest species count ever recorded for the Circle was 64, in 2015, according to Audubon's records. 111 species have been recorded over the last 17 years). A total of 4321 birds was seen this year, lower than last year's total of 5799 and much lower than the 2020 total of 8114. When one factors out the four species which show overall totals of more than 10,000 individuals over the past 17 years (Canada Goose, Rock Pigeon, American Crow, and European Starling), the remaining species total 1596 individuals, an increase from the 1491 seen last year, but again a significant decrease from 2020's total of 2078.

Other comparisons (2021/2022): Canada Goose 2013/1306 Rock Pigeon 332/536 American Crow 543/337
European Starling 1420/546 Waterbirds (except Canada Goose) 823/467 Raptors 31/39
Woodpeckers 33/44 Songbirds (except European Starling) 427/565

This year's participants were Jeff Bolsinger, Christine Bourquin, Sheree Brosk, Dick & Marion Brouse, Mary Charney, Lynn Chavoustie, Lee Ellsworth, Bill Haller (Compiler), Jauri Jantzi, Kathy Killeen, Joanne Lackey, Rosanne LaPlante, Corky Marlowe, Connie Mason, Bonnie McLaughlin, Lauri & Dee Piiparinen, Nikki Piiparinen, Mandi Roggie, John and Marie Smith, and Ray Spahn. Many, many thanks to our participants for once again making the Count a success.

Species Not Reported During The Previous 16 Watertown Circle Counts (1): *Evening Grosbeak*

Species Seen This Year But Not In 2021 (7): *Red-breasted Merganser, Red-throated Loon, Great Blue Heron, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Shrike, Evening Grosbeak*

Species Seen In 2021 But Not This Year (15): *Snow Goose, Mute Swan, Trumpeter Swan, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Hooded Merganser, Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, Northern Harrier, Ring-billed Gull, Great Horned Owl, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Winter Wren, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Common Grackle*

Data from the 2022 Count (the species name is followed by the total individuals reported for the species, which is followed in parentheses by the number of sectors, of 8, in which each species was sighted - "F" indicates species seen by feeder watchers):

GEESE, SWANS, & DUCKS: Canada Goose - 1306 (7) Tundra Swan - 50 (2) American Black Duck - 16 (2) Mallard - 210 (2)

Greater Scaup - 6 (1) Common Goldeneye - 76 (1) Common Merganser - 39 (2) Red-breasted Merganser - 16 (2)

GALLINACEOUS BIRDS: Wild Turkey - 40 (2) **LOONS:** Red-throated Loon - 4 (1) **HERONS:** Great Blue Heron - 2 (2)

EAGLES, HAWKS, & FALCONS: Bald Eagle - 5 (3) Sharp-shinned Hawk - 2 (2) Cooper's Hawk - 3 (2) Red-tailed Hawk - 19 (7)

Rough-legged Hawk - 6 (4) American Kestrel - 2 (2) Merlin - 1 (1) Peregrine Falcon - 1 (1)

GULLS & TERNS: Herring Gull - 48 (1) **DOVES & PIGEONS:** Rock Pigeon - 536 (8) Mourning Dove - 267 (7-F)

WOODPECKERS: Belted Kingfisher - 1 (1) Red-bellied Woodpecker - 9 (4-F) Downy Woodpecker - 18 (5-F) Hairy Woodpecker - 9 (3-F)

Northern Flicker - 6 (2-F) Pileated Woodpecker - 1 (1) **SHRIKES:** Northern Shrike - 4 (0-F)

JAYS & CROWS: Blue Jay - 159 (8-F) American Crow - 337 (8-F) Common Raven - 11 (6)

CHICKADEES & NUTHATCHES: Black-capped Chickadee - 141 (7-F) Tufted Titmouse - 12 (3-F) Red-breasted Nuthatch - 2 (1)

White-breasted Nuthatch - 19 (4-F) **KINGLETS & THRUSHES:** Eastern Bluebird - 4 (1) American Robin - 10 (4)

STARLINGS: European Starling - 546 (8-F) **WAXWINGS:** Cedar Waxwing - 62 (2)

SPARROWS & GROSBEAKS: American Tree Sparrow - 12 (3) Song Sparrow - 1 (1) White-throated Sparrow - 2 (1)

Dark-eyed Junco - 108 (6-F) Northern Cardinal - 54 (8-F) **BLACKBIRDS:** Red-winged Blackbird - 1 (1)

FINCHES: Purple Finch - 2 (0-F) House Finch - 30 (2-F) Common Redpoll - 2 (0-F) American Goldfinch - 51 (3-F)

Evening Grosbeak - 4 (1) **OLD WORLD SPARROWS:** House Sparrow - 48 (4-F)

(Sightings continued from page 2) Birding along Favret Rd in Cape Vincent on December 3, Robin sighted one male and two female Northern Harriers. She then saw an American Kestrel on Mason Rd. On a trip to Pillar Point the next day, Robin saw a Common Loon, a Double-crested Cormorant, Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, Buffleheads, Mallards, Herring and Ring-billed Gulls, Northern Cardinals, and a Red-tailed Hawk.

On December 4, Lee Ellsworth found 35+ Great Black-backed Gulls on Point Salubrious mingling with large numbers of Canada Geese and Ring-billed Gulls. Robin also reported seeing Great Black-backed Gulls there that day, as well as Common Ravens.

On December 11, Robin sighted 2 Northern Harriers along Millens Bay Rd and a Northern Harrier on Mason Rd. She visited the Otter Creek Preserve near Alexandria Bay on December 18 and found White-breasted Nuthatch, Common Raven, Black-capped Chickadee, and American Goldfinch. Going on to Grass Point State Park, she saw 45+ Mute Swans, 10+ American Black Ducks, and 4 Common Mergansers.

Lynn Chavoustie reported sighting 30 Snow Buntings, an immature Bald Eagle, and 5 Great Black-backed Gulls on December 19 on Three Mile Point. On the same day, Sheree Brosk saw a Merlin along Washington St in Watertown. Lynn was visited by ~20 Snow Buntings at her home in Three Mile Bay on December 26-27, then by a White-crowned Sparrow on December 28. Also on December 28, Robin sighted 3 Brown-headed Cowbirds on Sam Adams Rd. On January 1, Corky saw a flock of Snow Buntings on Rt 3A near Deferiet. On January 7, Robin was visited by ~70 Cedar Waxwings at her home in Cape Vincent.



DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT

Brookside Cemetery September 1, 2022

Photo by Jauri Jantzi



DARK-EYED JUNCO

Sackets Harbor January 2023

Photo by Kathy Killeen

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT PIPING PLOVERS?

From Onondaga Audubon's Info Sheet On Piping Plover Nesting Sites

Piping Plovers are only found in North America and are a unique part of our American natural heritage. They require a healthy dune and sandy beaches to thrive and having them present [along the eastern shore of Lake Ontario] is a positive indication that the restoration work that has been performed here over the past few decades has increased the resiliency of this barrier system. The creation of a healthy barrier system not only protects our sandy beaches but also protects habitat for many other rare, threatened and endangered species including other birds like Common Terns, insects like hairy necked tiger beetles, and vegetation that holds our dunes in place. Piping Plovers are also instrumental in attracting bird watchers to the area, which benefits the local economy. Finally, since they are an endangered species, we have a responsibility to conserve and promote their survival, as our actions are the main cause of their decline.

Piping Plovers nest in places besides the Great Lakes. There are 3 separate breeding populations of Piping Plovers: the Atlantic Coast population, the Northern Great Plains population, and the Great Lakes population. The Great Lakes population is by far the smallest, with 60 to 75 pairs. The Atlantic Coast population recently reached a high of around 2,000 pairs, and the Great Plains population is believed also to be around 2,000 pairs.

The Great Lakes Piping Plover is really endangered. It is listed as endangered by the federal government as well as in New York State. Historically, there were approximately 500-700 pairs of Piping Plovers nesting throughout the Great Lakes region. In the 1930s, approximately 27 pairs were known to have nested in New York. 12-14 of these New York pairs were at Sandy Pond. The Great Lakes population reached a low of only 12 total pairs in 1990, but have slowly begun to recover thanks to dedicated management. In 2015, Piping Plovers returned to our Eastern Lake Ontario shores after an absence of 31 years and have nested here regularly since. In 2021, we found 74 pairs throughout the Great Lakes, but only 2 of those nested in New York. This means that we have a long way to go to reach the recovery goal of 150 pairs declared in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Plan.



**THE BUNTING SHOW
ALWAYS A FELINE FAVORITE**

Three Mile Bay December 27, 2022

Photo by Lynn Chavoustie

Our thanks to Susan Gwise for calling our attention to the following item posted on the Cornell Lab website:

LOST PIGEON FOUND AFTER MORE THAN A CENTURY

by Pat Leonard - Posted November 17, 2022

A September expedition to Papua New Guinea confirmed via video the existence of the black-naped pheasant pigeon, a critically endangered species that has not been reported for 140 years. "For much of the trip, it seemed like we had no chance of finding this bird," said Jordan Boersma, co-leader of the expedition and a postdoctoral researcher at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "We were just two days away from the end of our time on Fergusson Island in Papua New Guinea when one of our remote cameras recorded the bird walking around and fanning its tail."

The group captured the first-ever video and still photos of the bird, a large ground-dwelling species with a rust-colored back, a black head and body, and a bobbing pheasant-like tail. It may only exist far inland on Fergusson Island in hot, extremely rugged terrain, with twisty rivers and dense with biting insects and leeches. "After a month of searching, seeing those first photos of the pheasant pigeon felt like finding a unicorn," said John C. Mittermeier of the American Bird Conservancy, a core member of the expedition team. "It's the kind of moment you dream about your entire life as a conservationist and birdwatcher."

Almost nothing is known of the black-naped pheasant pigeon apart from two specimens collected in 1882. There are no recordings of its sounds. The researchers think it would likely sound similar to a different pheasant pigeon species on mainland Papua New Guinea – a sound locals compare to the despairing cry of a woman ostracized by her community. Tapping into Indigenous knowledge was key to the expedition's success. Doka Nason, a local bird expert, joined the search and advised the team on where to look. Nason set up the camera that eventually recorded the bird. "When I saw the photos, I was incredibly excited," he said. "I was jumping around yelling, 'We did it!'"

"It was an experience of a lifetime working with Fergusson Islanders to find the pheasant pigeon, and giving talks at schools and villages about our search was a highlight," said Jason Gregg, a co-leader of the expedition. "Kids were whispering the local name of the bird – Auwo – and everyone was talking about it. I'm so happy we know this species survives, and it opens opportunities to learn even more about the bird and its incredible home."

But conservationists are concerned. The principal landowner where the bird was found told the search team he'd just signed a deal with a logging company – a move that could threaten the black-naped pheasant pigeon and its habitat. The team is pursuing funding so they can go back to Fergusson and try to find out how many of the species are left. "The reason I care, why I think we should all care, is that this bird has meant something and continues to mean something to the local people," Boersma said. "It's part of their legends and culture. If we lose this species, then its cultural importance will be lost along with the role it plays in this fantastic ecosystem."

(Maybe there is hope yet for recovering the Ivory-billed Woodpecker.)



SNOW BUNTINGS

Three Mile Bay December 27, 2022

Photo by Lynn Chavoustie



WATERFOWL SOCIALIZING IN SACKETS HARBOR

Dec 20, 2022 Photo by Connie Barone

Regular at \$10.00 Number _____ Total \$ _____

Sponsor at \$15.00 Number _____ Total \$ _____

Patron at \$20.00 Number _____ Total \$ _____

____ New ____ Renewal Total Dues \$ _____

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Watertown, NY 13601

Send newsletter by:
____ e-mail ____ USPS
(please check one)



AMERICAN AVOCET WITH RING-BILLED GULLS

Sherwins Bay November 11, 2022

Photo by Brian Miller

PLEASE FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF THE FORM

FUERTES PAINTING

PINE GROSBEAK

PURPLE FINCH



GREAT EGRET

Montezuma NWR

October 1, 2022

Photo by Jauri Jantzi



All birders are urged to assist in gathering data for New York's third **Breeding Bird Atlas**, a definitive resource for bird conservation efforts.

Begin at the How To Atlas page: [BBA3 - How To Atlas](#) For a map of Atlas blocks: [BBA3 - Blocks](#)

For further info and to submit checklists: [BBA3 - Checklists](#) (you will be asked to sign in to or to create an eBird account)

Website Links: All links in the electronic issue of the *Plover* are in "live" format. Clicking on the link will automatically open its website in your browser.

To be added to our **E-mail Notification List** for news of select sightings and events in the area, contact the Editor at haldex@twcny.rr.com

To subscribe to e-mailed information from the DEC (select from over 100 topics), go to the subscription page at [DEC Subscriptions](#)

Join the **New York State Ornithological Association (NYSOA)**. Membership includes both quarterly journal and newsletter. Info at [NYSOA](#)

N C B C ACTIVITIES

Meetings / Programs: March, April, May, September, October, November (2nd Wed)

Field Trips: Spring - Summer - Fall

Spring Bird Census

Audubon Christmas Bird Count

Newsletter: *The Upland Plover*

The North Country Bird Club, Inc., is a charter member of the New York State Ornithological Association, Inc.

RECEIVE *THE UPLAND PLOVER* ONLINE

The same as the printed version, but in **COLOR!** (Viewed with Adobe Reader)

Contact the Editor (haldex@twcny.rr.com) to sign up.

ITEMS FOR THE NEXT *PLOVER* ARE DUE BY FEBRUARY 15

Please send sightings, photos, or other items to the Editor by February 15.

Contact info: Bill Haller, Editor - Mail: P. O. Box 6, Dexter, NY 13634

E-mail: haldex@twcny.rr.com - Phone: (315) 639-6848 or 778-1484

NORTH COUNTRY BIRD CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Membership is for the calendar year. Dues are *per individual*. Renewals are due by January 1st. To ensure that you receive Club materials, please give your correct *mailing* address below.

Name(s): _____

E-mail: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

REMEMBER TO INCLUDE YOUR DUES PAYMENT

PLEASE FILL OUT BOTH SIDES OF THE FORM