

# River Talk

Newsletter of the Carantouan Greenway



Spring 2019

## Birds of Iceland to be Annual Dinner Topic

The Greenway's annual dinner meeting will be held April 3rd at 6:00 at Tomasso's in Waverly. This year we are honored have Bob McGuire and Marie Reed who will be presenting "Icelandic Saga", which describes their experience studying the birds of Iceland. Marie and Bob spent a combined total of three weeks this past summer photographing and recording the birds of the country.

Bob is a former president of the Cayuga Bird Club and editor of "Birding the Cayuga Lake Basin". An avid birder and sound recordist, he has contributed over 4,500 recordings to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Macaulay Library. His personal collection includes the vocalizations of 600 North American birds.

Marie is a professional wildlife photographer and author, based in Freeville NY, who specializes in birds and their behavior. Her images are published worldwide in magazines, books, and calendars, and she has authored many articles as well as several books. Her latest book, "Mastering Bird Photography" is available as an e-book and in print in March 2019.

Join them for a tour of this exotic land: the remote highlands, seabird cliffs, and offshore islands. Lots of Puffins, too!

The dinner meeting is being held at Tomasso's Restaurant in Waverly, NY. It begins with a cash bar from 6:00-6:30,

*Continued on page 3...Birds of Iceland*



*Marie waits for the perfect shot.*



*The vast landscape supports the hundreds of birds that either live here or visit throughout the year.*

### In this issue

- Birds of Iceland
- President's Note 2019
- Keeping Piggy House Sparrows Away
- Leaves on Snow
- Something New, 4K Moves to April
- The Life of a Bird Box
- Wetlands

### President's Note 2019

Another year has passed and with your support and the volunteer efforts of your volunteer board of directors we continue to educate our citizenry and provide healthy opportunities for communing with nature. We also continue to partner with Futurscapes' Diahoga Trail and Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District. During the year we completed work on tick education in the Tioga Central and Waverly School Districts while working in concert with the Tioga County Health Department. Using a Mildred Faulkner Truman Foundation grant we completed our efforts in mapping the trails in the Greater Two Rivers State Park. Our speaker from our last annual dinner has been successful in getting

*Continued on page 2...President's Note*

## Keeping Those Piggy House Sparrows Away From Your Backyard Feeders

If you have been watching the seed in your bird feeders being gobbled up by swarms of House Sparrows while your songbirds sit on the fringes going hungry, do not despair, there is something you can do to discourage them. Although House Sparrows can be interesting and attractive in their own way, they can be aggressive toward the more timid species at your feeders, and they often take over any birdhouses you have. House Sparrows prefer to live around humans, and since they are notoriously prolific, this can create quite a problem for people who encourage birds to be in their backyards. There are items called “feeder halos” that can be purchased, but because feeders come in many shapes it is hard to know which style will work for yours. Instead, here is a simple way to make your own, and it works very well.

All you need is a snow/rain hood to hang over the feeder, some 26 gauge aluminum wire, and a few small hex nuts. Drill four to six holes evenly spaced around the bottom rim of the hood. Then cut four to six pieces of the wire about two inches longer than the distance between the bottom of the hood and the bottom of the feeder. Attach a hex nut to one end of each wire and another about halfway up. Then attach the wires through the holes in the hood, and let them dangle past the feeder.

The concept behind this ‘halo’ is that the House Sparrows see the wires as a hindrance to escaping from the feeder in times of danger. Another theory is that the wires may also have something to do with the angle at which different species approach feeders. Interestingly, the wires do not bother other species such as finches, cardinals, chickadees, woodpeckers, and titmice. We hung these wires around all of our feeders, and for a week or two we watched the House Sparrows try repeatedly to approach the feeders and be repelled. They would disappear for a few days and then return to try again. After several weeks the House Sparrows disappeared entirely from our yard, and our songbirds are enjoying the bounty we provide in undisturbed peace. I am thinking about trying the same technique around our birdhouses.

### Something new! 4K run moves to April

It seems fitting for a nature preserve to recognize Earth Day. Therefore, the Greenway’s board has voted to move the organization’s annual trail run to late April, closer to Earth Day. Join us Saturday, April 27 at 10 a.m. at the Wildwood Nature Preserve. There will still be the usual noncompetitive run through the wooded and open field trails as in the past. Registration



remains at \$20 per runner and includes a t-shirt and soup. Participants also have the chance to win prizes from area businesses. Register online at [carantouangreenway.org](http://carantouangreenway.org) or call 607-742-8309 (leave a message) for further information. Wildwood Preserve is located at 254 Shepard Road, Waverly, NY.

### President’s Note (continued from page 1)

the hellbender nominated as the Pennsylvania amphibian.

Our newsletters have had articles on the mosquito, pollinators, the hellbender, speakers, grant results and photographic confirmation of bobcats having been spotted at Wildwood. Your board has had the opportunity to have a presentation by Emily Cote of NYCON on social media communication. So I now ask each one of you reading this to communicate via Facebook about our annual dinner and the 4k run—please put it out there.

The Board elected to match \$5,000 by adding that amount to our Endowment Fund with the Community Foundation for the Twin Tiers.

Our treasurer, Jim Daly will soon be completing his fiscal duties serving as the interim treasurer for another partner, “Friends of Greater Two Rivers State Park” as they receive their 501(c)3 recognition.

We are presently in the process of contemplating applying for a grant to extend our tree trail to the Diahoga trail. Another project for this spring will be to use wire mesh to protect our Wildwood apple plantings. As president I want to thank each of you for your continuing support.

~Marty Borko

## Leaves on snow



An early November snow storm covered Wildwood and left signs of mammal hunting and avian predation. The pine woods lay quiet with a few leaves and needles lying on the surface. The sharp pointed leaves are those of our most common oak, the red oak, while the more rounded-lobed leaf belongs to the white oak. For those who have oak flooring or oak furniture it is most probably from the red but both trees are commonly sought after for their wood. Both oaks

reproduce with acorns, which are a stable food for blue jays as well as red and gray squirrels. It takes but a single year for the white oak to produce its edible acorn but the red requires two years to produce a less edible fruit. The oaks in general are the most probable trees to hang onto their leaves into the winter months. There is a scattering of white pine needles pictured as well. The white pine grows its needles of leaves in clusters of five but these have busted out of their fascicles. The white pine is the northeast's largest conifer and is one of the preferred nesting trees for our returning population of bald eagles.

## Wetlands

In 2018 the Twin Tiers experienced the second wettest year on record. The ground was saturated with water and entered the Christmas season mushy and unfrozen. In 18 years of walking Wildwood trails this year has been most



extraordinary. The vernal pools that were created by the Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District in cooperation with the Upper Susquehanna Coalition have normally been dry going into the winter season. As this photo shows not only are the two vernal pools to the left and right of the photo full of water, but the water level of the pools is contiguous with the wet meadow behind the row of silky dogwood. These pools and wet meadow are located in the northeast corner of Wildwood.

## The Life of a Bird Box

John Palmer is the our nest-box facilitator. The nest boxes, mostly in the area of the dam, are put out with the hope of increasing blue-bird reproduction. They have, however, turned out to be mostly used by tree swallows, which we do not object to. Bluebirds like fairly open areas, with scattered trees for perching and low or sparse ground cover bordered by tree lines. We chose to place them near the alfalfa field (grown without herbicides or pesticides), which is prime habitat with plenty of water, insects and fruit to eat. The boxes have been used by nesting bluebirds as well as later nesting black-capped chickadees. We also suspect that the boxes have been used as a wintering overnight site for roosting bluebirds. In this particular photo one can see the freshly chewed entrance to the house and a background of snow. This is not bird work but most probably incisor chewing belonging to the white-footed mouse, which has used different boxes over the years to make it through the winter. The white-footed mouse is our most common wood-land mouse with great climbing skills and a mixed diet of insects, fruits and other vegetation.



## Birds of Iceland (continued from page 1)

followed by dinner and a brief business meeting, with the program starting at 7:30 p.m. To make reservations go to [carantouangreenway.org](http://carantouangreenway.org), call Jim Daly at 607-742-8309 to leave a message, or mail your check to the address on this newsletter. The price is \$25 per person. Note "Annual Dinner" on memo line.

Friends of the Carantouan Greenway

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