



MUCKRACE MUSINGS

Volume 19 September 2015

The 19th Annual Muckrace

This 'Big Day', 24-hour birding event and premier fund-raising effort of the Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex continues to provide good times for birders of all ages. Although rain paid a visit mid-day on Saturday, and returned with about a half-hour to go, spirits were not dampened for the all-time record numbers of 135 participants and 37 teams.

A grand total of 188 species were recorded by at least one team. In the competitive category, "B.S. in Birding", a new team of students from U of Rochester and Brockport, topped out with 121 species, which matches last year's highest single team total. In the Recreational category, the "Geneseedeaters" checked off 101 species and made it to first place in that category for the 3rd time in their 3 years of Muckracing. The "From Heron to Bitternity" team placed first in the Family/Mentor category with 96 species. The Shutterbirds (Eaton Birds) won the Photo category for a second year in a row with 71 species - one more than they tallied last year. The Low-Carbon category was again won by Team Sittidae (Eaton Birding Society) with 57 species recorded at their single location - Knox-Marsellus Marsh. Finally, we were happy to see 2 Youth teams this year, with "Birds R Us" (sponsored by Rochester Birding Association/Gen. Valley Audubon) coming out on top with a very strong 89 species. Nicholas Kachala and Robert Buckert made up that well-prepared, successful new Youth team, and their highlight of the day was seeing and carefully identifying a Long-billed Dowitcher.

Highlights and Notables - Overall, 19 species of waterfowl, 8 species of diurnal raptors, 21 species of shorebirds, 26 species of warblers, and 7 species of sparrows were recorded. Ross's Goose and Cattle Egret were two new species added to the cumulative 18-year Muckrace total. Six diving ducks were recorded this year, compared to only one last year. 55 of the 240 species listed on the all-time Muckrace list were not seen this year - including Snow Goose, Dark-eyed Junco, Canvasback, Caspian Tern and Brown Thrasher. Of the 31 species seen by only one team - Ruffed Grouse, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Eastern Towhee, Eastern Meadowlark, Yellow-headed and Rusty Blackbird, and 6 species of Warblers were notable.

2015 Quick Stats

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Teams registered: | 37 |
| Total species seen: | 188 |
| Cumulative total for all Muckraces: | 240 |
| Funds raised as of September 23rd: | \$9,000 |

Funds will support:
 Bird conservation, wildlife habitat improvement and public access in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex.

Winning Competitive team: B.S. in Birding – 121 species
 Winning Low-carbon team: Team Sittidae – 57 species
 Winning Recreational Team: Team Geneseedeaters – 101 species
 Winning Family/Mentor team: From Heron to Bitternity – 96 sp.
 Winning Photo team: The Shutterbirds – 71 species

Most memorable team birds: Snipe, Merlin, Baird's Sandpiper, Connecticut Warbler, Cliff Swallow, Yellow-billed Cuckoo.
New species seen only in 2014: Ross's Goose, Cattle Egret.
Notable Species NOT seen: Caspian Tern, Brown Thrasher, Dark-eyed Junco, Canvasback and Ring-necked Pheasant.

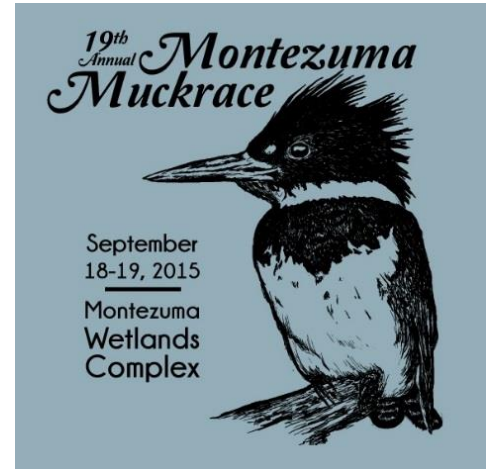
| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Warbler species recorded: | 26 |
| Shorebird species recorded: | 21 |

11 species seen by all teams; 31 seen by only 1 team

The aerial acrobatics of a Merlin and a pair of Peregrines were noted by several teams as highlights. Baird's Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope and Wilson's Warbler were favorite birds. A Connecticut Warbler that found one of the puddles on Towpath to be a good place to wash up in full view of Team Hooded Mergansters added a life bird for several team members.

Top business sponsors for this year's event were: Wild Birds Unlimited, Nucor Steel, Seneca Meadows, Ernst Conservation Seeds, Bass Pro and Avinet. Galens Pharmacy, Dave's Market, and A. Verdi Storage also provided funds. An all-time high 31 local businesses provided over \$2,000 worth of food or prizes for the participants, most notably: MAC Nature Store, Ducks Unlimited, Cayuga Lake Creamery, Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Lyn Jacobs, Montezuma Winery, Old Lyons Hardware and the Bird House.

Fundraising is a big part of the Muckrace, and as of this date, over \$9,000 has been raised to support conservation efforts in the Complex, especially those efforts that will contribute to more birds and better viewing. Teams have until October 15th to do their pledge drives. Donations on behalf of any team, or for the Muckrace in general, can be made through the Friends of Montezuma website (friendsofmontezuma.org) or via mail at Friends of Montezuma, c/o Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, 3395 Rt 5 & 20 East, Seneca Falls, NY 13148.



Top 5 fundraising teams for last year were Team Sittidae (\$1,153), Bob-O-Links (\$976), MAC Daddy & the Chicks (\$645), Mommazuma & the Malerds (\$590) and Geneseedeaters (\$490). Team Sittidae is conspicuously perched atop the prestigious 'Top Fundraising Team' trophy as winners in 2013 and 2014. We will have to wait and see if any other team can top their good work in 2015.

In the 19-year Muckrace history, over \$120,000 has been donated in support of bird habitat restoration, research or public access. Recent projects have included: construction of Nursery Pond (a source for emergent wetland plants and seed), a touch screen display at the Montezuma Audubon Center highlighting habitat restoration, removal of invasive plants and replacement with wildflowers for pollinators at the Refuge Visitor Center, improvement of water level management on a 448-acre impoundment, construction of the Deep Muck observation deck, and support for American Black Duck winter banding. Potential projects for future Muckrace funding include: habitat restoration at the new Refuge property off Armitage Road, shorebird habitat (mudflat) management and two additional observation platforms.

If you'd like to start making plans for next year's Muckrace – of course you would! – reserve the 16th and 17th of September. That's following our new formula, instituted last year – the second Friday after Labor Day. The start was moved one week later to avoid the busy back-to-school week. This has allowed families and students a better opportunity to participate without the complications of Labor Day week and the first week of school.

Several nice comments have been received from participants and posted on various listservs. Speaking for the Planning Team and Volunteers, we sincerely appreciate those kind words. It has been fun watching this event grow over the years and we hope everyone will return next year. Please contact the Friends if you'd like to help organize next year's Muckrace. It is truly a unique event on many levels, as Kimberly Sucky of the Geneseedeaters noted in her listserv post: *"The day was filled with great memories - The Bittern on the Berm, the sweet song of a Blue-headed Vireo, the trill of the Screech-Owls and the whinny of a Sora. It was filled with pain points, like the departure of so many species right before we arrived, the trains, the storm front, the blasted QUIET, that stupid bridge. It was filled with friendly faces and some great new birders in the Race. All these teams working towards the goals of glory, prizes, hot pizza and most of all conservation of our precious wetlands makes for a wonderful day."*

We hope to see you next year at Muckrace #20! For more information on the Muckrace, Friends of Montezuma and the Montezuma Audubon Center, check out friendsofmontezuma.org and ny.audubon.org/Montezuma.

Team Results 2015

Competitive

1. B.S. in Birding 121
2. Wind Birders (L & B Farm) 115
3. Team Terradroma 109
4. Winging It (SUNY-ESF Bird Club) 105
5. DEC Craniacs 104
6. Kestrels 100
7. DEC Mad-capped Chickadees 89
8. DEC Loon-a-tics 84
9. Hawkward Students (SUNY COBY) 71
10. Mottled Mucks (Jack Bear Stamps) 70
11. The Fowl Players (SUNY COBY) 59

Low-Carbon

1. Team Sittidae (Eaton Birding Society) 57

Photo

1. Shutterbirds (Eaton Birding Society) 71
2. Kros-Eyed Fotosnappers 52

Youth

1. Birds R Us (RBA/GVAS) 89
2. Venture Crew 7 28

Family/Mentor

1. From Heron to Bitternity 96
2. Counting Crows 78
3. MAC Daddy and the Chicks (Audubon NY) 71
4. Mucky Ducks (Old Duck Inn B & B) 62
5. Mommazuma & the Malerds 51
6. Terns and Conditions 50

Recreational

1. Geneseedeaters (Roch. Davis-Fetch Corp) 101
2. Tyrannus tyrannus 96
3. Arrogant Bustards (Cayuga Bird Club) 93
4. Heron Starin' 82
5. Lime Hollowers (Lime Hollow Nature Center) 81
6. Buffleheads 80
7. Hooded Mergansters 79
8. Bleary Eyed Vireos (Eaton Birding Society) 75
9. The Hawkeyes (Stell Environ. Enterprises) 74
10. The Fuddy Ruddies 73
11. Bronze Spruce Grouse 71
12. Bob-O-Links (Eaton Birding Society) 69
13. Creeper Peepers 63
14. The Tanagers (Chemung Valley Audubon) 60
14. The Nature Conservancy (Cent. & W. Chap.) 60

Thanks to all of our 2015 Donors and Sponsors, especially...



A Note from the Planning Committee

(Linda and Steve Benedict, Linda Potter, Chris Lajewski, Jim Eckler, Leona Lauster, Dave Robertson, Chuck Gibson, Linda Ziemba)

We want to say thank you to the following generous sponsors for their financial support or prize donations:

- Barry Stevens of **Wild Birds Unlimited** for being our top sponsor;
- Bass Pro (Auburn), Nucor Steel of Auburn, ISEI Corporation (Seneca Meadows Landfill), Ducks Unlimited, Avinet (Dryden), Galens Pharmacy, Ernst Conservation Seeds, Inc., Montezuma Winery and Cayuga Lake Creamery for their generous donations;
- Additional local supporting businesses: Old Lyons Hardware, Parker's Grill, Tom Lenweaver, Ciccino's Pizzeria, Dave's Market, Jack Courtney photography, Charlie Rouse, Lakeland Equipment, Lynn Jacobs, Magee Diner, Mark Miller, Thorn Farm, Emile's Restaurant, Cayuga Bird Club, Deerhead Inn, Brick Oven, Apple Shed, Abigails, Wolff's Grill, and, last but not least,
- The Friends Nature Store at the MNWR Visitor Center and the MAC Nature Store.

Thanks also go to artist Jody Benedict for providing a wonderful t-shirt design, and to Becky Bly of Woman Made Products for her generosity in screening the shirts. Special thanks to those that helped feed the hungry mob: Dunkin' Donuts, Apple Shed, Wegmans, Tops and Nice-N-Easy Grocery Shoppes.

We also appreciate all team sponsors: SUNY-ESF Birding Club, L & B Farm, Old Duck Inn B & B (Clyde), Jack Bear Stamps, Rochester Davis-Fetch Corp., Stell, Lime Hollow Nature Center, Chemung Valley Audubon Society, Eaton Birding Society, Audubon NY, RBA/GVAS, and the Cayuga Bird Club.

We could not have done it without all our great event volunteers: Ruth & Don Kalen, Dorothy & Gary Colvin, Donna Richardson, Gretchen Schauss, Linda Benedict, Linda Potter, Joan Robertson, Leona Lauster, Dave and Grace Strong, David and Linda Marsh. Special thanks to David Robertson for organizing this great group.

Final thanks also go to: The Montezuma Audubon Center for hosting the festivities; NYSDEC, FOTMWC and the MAC for printing and mailing costs; Ray Hunt, Paul Schmitt and Luann Mongelli for their photography; and Chris Lajewski for emceeing the final ceremony.

- Please submit suggestions and comments, to a Planning Committee member.

Highlights of the Day

Snagging a Green Heron at the last second.
Falcons (Merlin and Peregrine) flushing egrets and shorebirds.

Friends birding together.
Sharing sightings with other teams.
Beautiful views of Harriers.

A pair of Peregrines.
Lots of warblers on Howland Island.

Lonely little Cliff Swallow.
2 Osprey and a TUVU in the MAC wetlands.
Nice to see Monarch butterflies again.

Turkeys, finally, at 6:00 PM – right in the road!
6 life birds.

Star gazing and listening to 5 species of owls on HI.
Spending time with family; watching hovering harriers and soaring eagles.

Quotes of the Day

I hope we see a Virginia Reel.

Who's driving the car? (while car was in motion)
It's the 'woodchuck' in me that makes me call it a 'Green Herring'.

Don't ask me, I've never been to a peep show. (When asked about sandpiper ID)

I'm proud to call you my Dad. (MAC Daddy and the Chicks)

This is how horror movies start.
We're gonna kick some serious bird rump!

Lowlights of the Day

The storm front.
Rt 89 bridge over canal was closed.
Rain!

Not finding a Titmouse.
Low light! (from a photo category team)
1,000 mosquitoes in the van to start the day.
Absolutely none.

Mark your calendar!
Muckrace 2016 (#20!)
is Friday-Saturday
September 16th-17th,
7PM-7PM
That's the second
Friday after Labor Day
(9/5/2016) .

