



# MUCKRACE MUSINGS

Volume 21 September 2017

## The 21st Annual Muckrace

The Montezuma Muckrace is a team-birding fundraising event that started back in 1997 and continues to challenge and entertain birders in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. On Friday September 15<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 pm, 90 birders from 25 teams stormed the Complex for a 24-hour period and successfully rustled up good looks at a diverse mix of 173 species. Tallies included 20 warblers, 13 species of waterfowl and 18 shorebirds.

Muckracers also continue to step up their fundraising efforts. As of this writing, we have surpassed our goal of raising \$10,000 in support of bird conservation, habitat improvement and public access in the Complex. Sponsorships of the event have also been strong from community and conservation minded companies and individuals. Over \$2,300 in funds from 11 sponsors and \$4,000 in prizes were donated.

A pair of calling Sandhill Cranes flying over the Montezuma Audubon Center 1 minute after the clock ticked 7:00 on Friday night was a highlight for many teams. A Merlin snagging a swallow was also unforgettable. Several teams ran into massive flocks of swallows working fields and marshes. A good look at an American Bittern, and, of course mini blueberry muffins were highlights for the Chemung Valley Audubon sponsored "Tanagers". An outstanding thrush fallout was noted by several teams that braved the early morning mist on Howland's Island. American Golden Plover, Barred Owl, a last-minute Horned Lark, an American Pipit that brought to a total of 150 species tallied at the Old Duck Inn property in Clyde, and Northern Parula were mentioned as favorite birds.

The teams collectively identified 100 bird species that have been seen in every Muckrace. Only two species were missed that had been perennially claimed – Chimney Swift and Black-bellied Plover. While no new species were added this year -- Cattle Egret, Common Goldeneye, and Fish Crow were relatively rare pickups. The most commonly seen birds (seen by all 25 teams) totaled 21 species in all, and included notable finds of Great Egret, Green Heron, and Greater Yellowlegs.

Competition among teams is one enjoyable part of the event. Besides a better choice of cool prizes, you can also take home bragging rights; maybe even get your name on one of the 3 Muckrace trophies. A new team, "Lawrence's Warbler Chasers" took home top honors in the Competitive Division with 126 species. Sharp-shinned hawk, Baird's

**2017 Quick Stats**

Teams registered:	25
Total species seen:	173
Cumulative total for all Muckraces:	243
Funds raised as of September 24th:	\$10,545

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

**Winning Competitive team: Lawrence's Warbler Chasers – 126 sp.**  
Winning Low-carbon team: Terns and Conditions – 65 species  
Winning Recreational Team: Birds R Us – 117 species  
Winning Collegiate Division: SUNY ESF Ptarmageddon – 62 species  
Winning Family/Mentor team: MAC Daddy and the Chicks – 82 sp.  
Winning Photo team: Shutterbirds – 65 species

**Most memorable team birds:** Merlin, Am. Golden Plover, Am. Bittern, Horned Lark, Sandhill Crane, Green Heron, Barred Owl, American Pipit, Bobolink, Northern Parula

**New species:** none.

**Notable Species NOT seen:** Snow goose, Ruffed Grouse, Eastern Kingbird, Baltimore Oriole, Black-bellied Plover, Chimney Swift

**Warbler species recorded:** 20  
**Shorebird species recorded:** 18  
21 species seen by all teams; 18 seen by only 1 team



*"Lawrence's Warbler Chasers": Tiffany Clay, Jon Podoliak, Mike Wasilco, and Greg Lawrence.*

Sandpiper, Greater Black-backed Gull, Least Flycatcher, Purple Martin, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Common Nighthawk, Lincoln's Sparrow and Purple Finch were some of their rarer finds. A very strong 117 species were identified by the RBA/GVA sponsored "Birds R Us" team, last year's winners in the Youth Division, and competing for their first time in the Recreation Division. The Low Carbon Division was won again by "Terns and Conditions". The "Shutterbird(s)", with Mark Miller running solo this year, took home the honor of Photo Division Champion(s). "Team Sittidae" has a commanding lead, once again, for the most-prestigious, highly-coveted Fundraising Trophy. Congratulations also to Family/Mentor Division winners "MAC Daddy and the Chicks" and "Ptarmageddon" from SUNY ESF who took home the Collegiate Division Trophy to be displayed prominently back in Illick Hall.



*SUNY ESF "Ptarmageddon": Max Chabra, Emma Gutierrez, Alexandra Yattaw and Alexandria Soldo.*

Top business sponsors for this year's event were: Wild Birds Unlimited, Nucor Steel, Ducks Unlimited, Ernst Conservation Seeds, Seneca Meadows, and Eagle Optics. Over 30 additional sponsors provided funds and prizes.

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](http://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 6 fundraising teams for last year were: Team Sittidae (\$1,922), Bobolinks (\$900), Hawkeyes (\$782), Wind Birders (\$600), Arrogant Bustards (\$560) and DEC Crane-iacs (\$465).

In the 21-year Muckrace history, over \$143,000 has been donated in support of bird habitat restoration, research or public access. Recent projects have included: 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 several observation decks, Motus Radio Telemetry deployment, and support for American Black Duck winter banding.

If you'd like to start making plans for next year's Muckrace – of course you would! – Reserve the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of September, 2018. Enjoy the great camaraderie, time afield, and support the good work of the Friends of Montezuma Wetlands Complex. We know 'birding' is a great life-long pastime; make birding the Muckrace the same.

For more information on the Muckrace and the Montezuma Wetlands Complex, check out our various websites: [friendsofmontezuma.org](http://friendsofmontezuma.org), [ny.audubon.org/Montezuma](http://ny.audubon.org/Montezuma), [fws.gov/refuge/montezuma/](http://fws.gov/refuge/montezuma/), and [dec.ny.gov/outdoor/31112.html](http://dec.ny.gov/outdoor/31112.html).



*"Birds R Us" (Nick Kachala, Chan Nam, Ty Carey and Robert Buckert) placed first in the Recreational category with an outstanding 117 species.*

## 21st Annual Muckrace Results:

### Competitive

1. Lawrence's Warbler Chasers	126
2. "Jay McGowan"	122
3. Windbirders	115
4. Mad-Capped Chickadees	94
5. The Loon-A-Tics	91
6. Crane-iacs	84

### Family

1. Mac Daddy and the Chicks	82
2. Mucky Ducks	64

### Collegiate

1. SUNY ESF Ptarmageddon	62
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### Low Carbon

1. Terns & Conditions	65
2. Team Sittidae	43

### Photo

1. Shutterbirds	65
2. Mottled Mucks	49

### Recreational

1. Birds R Us	117
2. Arrogant Bustards	98
3. Ruff Ryders	96
4. Tyrannus Tyrannus	93
5. The Tanagers	90
5. The Hawkeyes	90
7. Bobolinks	85
8. Brown Thrashers	78
9. Team Fonzie	74
10. Aix & Cranes	68
11. Bleary-eyed Vireos	65
12. Fuddy Ruddies	61

Thanks to all of our 2017 Donors and Sponsors, especially...



## A Note from the Planning Committee

(Linda and Steve Benedict, Chris Lajewski, Jim Eckler, Chuck Gibson, Linda Ziemba, Kent Kowalski, and Kyle Gage)

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, once again;
- Nucor Steel of Auburn, Ernst Conservation Seeds, Inc., ISEI Corporation (Seneca Meadows Landfill), Ducks Unlimited, Eagle Optics, Montezuma Winery, Galen Pharmacy, Savannah Bank, Reliant Community FCU, Community Bank, Lyons National Bank, Avian Research (Avinet), and Cayuga Lake Creamery for their generous donations;
- Additional local support from: Old Lyons Hardware, Herb Philipson's, LandPro, 84 Fall Restaurant, Parker's Grill and Tap House, Dave's Meat Market, Linda and Steve Benedict, Esther Benedict, Magee Diner, Moon Rabbit Foods, Diane Slater, Seamist Designs, Walmart, Tops, Brick Oven, Abigail's, Wolff's Grill, and, last but not least...
- The Friends Nature Store at the Refuge Visitor Center and the MAC Gift Shop.

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 Kyle Gage for donating snacks for the masses.

We also appreciate all team sponsors: SUNY-ESF Guy Baldassarre Birding Club, L & B Farm, Old Duck Inn B & B (Clyde), Jack Bear Stamps, The Bird House, 3 Oaks Enhancements, Chemung Valley Audubon Society, Ben Harvey, 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, Tiffany Clay, Leona Lauster, Margaret Gage, Yang Yingzhen, Dave Strong, David and Linda Marsh. Special thanks to Kyle Gage 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; Joan Robertson for her photography; and Frank Morlock for emceeding the final ceremony.

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



## Highlights of the Day

Last minute Horned Lark  
Finishing up and anticipating a nap!  
Seeing Merlin snag a swallow  
Mini Blueberry muffins

## Quotes of the Day

There's a treasure in every flock.  
Did we have greater Lesser Yellowlegs there...  
or greater Greater Yellowlegs there?  
What is that?  
We're going for 110% -- 50% of us see it...  
and we're 60% sure of the ID.  
Where the birds at?

## Lowlights of the Day

Baking in the sun.  
The long hot walk down Towpath.  
Fog and mosquitoes.  
Missing Sandhill and redtail.  
Quiet.  
Lack of rails and feeder birds.  
Missing photos for any 1 of 3 hummingbirds.

Mark your calendar!  
Muckrace 2018 (#22)  
is Friday-Saturday  
September 14th-15th,  
7PM-7PM  
That's the second  
Friday after Labor Day

