



# MUCKRACE MUSINGS

Volume 20 September 2016

## The 20th Annual Muckrace

A great turnout of enthusiastic birders enjoyed the 'Big Day', 24-hour birding event and premier fund-raising effort of the Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. This was the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Muckrace and it continues to provide good times for birders of all skills and ages. A full moon provided almost daylight-like viewing late into Friday evening. The predicted rain held off until Saturday evening and only caused a little hardship running back to our cars after the closing ceremony.

We totaled 116 participants and 30 teams, and a grand total of 183 species were recorded. Highlights and Notables - Overall, 17 species of waterfowl, 12 species of diurnal raptors, 21 species of shorebirds, 22 species of warblers, and 8 species of sparrows were recorded. Brown Booby, Pine Siskin and Little Gull were 3 new species added which brings to 243 the cumulative 20-year Muckrace total. Only 3 species of diving ducks were recorded this year, compared to 6 last year. 61 of the 243 species listed on the all-time Muckrace list were not seen this year – including Dark-eyed Junco, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Least Bittern, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and Pine Warbler. Of the 23 species seen by only one team – Brown Thrasher, Veery, Ring-necked Pheasant, Eastern Towhee, Eastern Kingbird, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Saw Whet Owl, Common and Hooded



*In the competitive category, "The Basin Chasin' Jays", a new team from Cornell, topped out with 125 species, 4 more than last year's highest single team total.*



### 2016 Quick Stats

Teams registered:	30
Total species seen:	183
Cumulative total for all Muckraces:	243
Funds raised as of September 24th:	\$9,000

### Funds will support:

Bird conservation, wildlife habitat improvement and public access in the Montezuma Wetlands Complex. 2016 focus: Motus Wildlife Tracking Towers

### Winning Competitive team: Basin Chasin' Jays – 125 species

Winning Low-carbon team: Terns and Conditions – 52 species

Winning Youth Team: Birds R Us – 104 species

Winning Recreational Team: Ruff Ryders – 108 species

Winning Collegiate Division: SUNY COBY Terninators – 80 species

Winning Family/Mentor team: MAC Daddy and the Chicks – 65 sp.

Winning Photo team: The Woodcocks – 73 species

**Most memorable team birds:** Brown Boobie, Merlin, Dunlin, Eurasian Wigeon, Connecticut Warbler, Pine Siskin.

**New species:** Pine Siskin, Brown Boobie and Little Gull.

**Notable Species NOT seen:** Dark-eyed Junco, G-crowned Kinglet

**Warbler species recorded:** 22

**Shorebird species recorded:** 21

17 species seen by all teams; 23 seen by only 1 team

Merganser, and 5 species of Warblers were notable.

Other than those category winners shown as images, here are the other winners: in the Recreational category, the "Ruff Ryders" checked off an all-time high for the Rec category of 108 species. The "Woodcocks" won the Photo category with 73 species. The Low-Carbon category was won by "Terns and Conditions" with 52 species recorded on their family bike trip. Finally, "Birds R Us" (sponsored by Rochester Birding Association/Gen. Valley Audubon) came out on top of the Youth category (again) with a very strong 104 species.

The 90+ Great Egrets that were settled in at Morgan Road Marsh under bright moonlight were noted by several teams as highlights. Eurasian Wigeon, Barred Owl, Pine Siskin and Peregrine Falcon were mentioned as favorite birds. Eastern Screech Owl and Sandhill Crane were life birds for the new “Hi-Lights” team.

Top business sponsors for this year’s event were: Wild Birds Unlimited, Nucor Steel, Seneca Meadows, Ernst Conservation Seeds, and Bass Pro. Local businesses provided over \$4,000 worth of food or prizes for the participants, most notably: Ducks Unlimited, MAC Nature Store, Cayuga Lake Creamery, Montezuma Winery, Old Lyons Hardware and the Refuge Lodge.



*The new Collegiate Division trophy was won by the SUNY Cobleskill “Terninators”.*

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](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. A focus for this year’s funds is installation of Motus towers – a new wildlife tracking system. For more information, visit [motus.org](http://motus.org).

Top 5 fundraising teams for last year were: Team Sittidae (\$1,462), Hawkeyes (\$815), Bobolinks (\$595), Mottled Mucks (\$540), and Mommazuma & the Malerds (\$535).

In the 20-year Muckrace history, over \$125,000 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 the Deep Muck observation deck, 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 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of September,

2017. That’s following our formula, instituted several years ago – the second Friday after Labor Day. The start was moved one week later to avoid the busy back-to-school week. We hope this has allowed families and students a better opportunity to participate without the complications of Labor Day week and the first week of school.

Speaking for the Planning Team, we especially appreciated the closing ceremony comments from many teams which highlighted the camaraderie exhibited during the event, the great opportunity for building unforgettable family memories, support for the low-carbon option, and support for ‘birding’ as a great life-long pastime. It has been fun watching this event grow over the years. We hope to see you next year as we begin working on a second 20-year run! 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).



*“MAC Daddy and the Chicks” placed first in the Family/Mentor category with 65 species.*

## 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Montezuma Muckrace Results:

### Competitive

1. Basin Chasin' Jays	125
2. B. S. in Birding	121
3. Windbirders	119
4. Crane-iacs	107
5. The Loon-A-Tics	96
6. The Buffleheads	90
7. Mad-Capped Chickadees	89
8. Mottled Mucks	84

### Youth

1. Birds R Us	104
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### Family

1. Mac Daddy and the Chicks	65
2. Counting Crows	54
3. Mommazuma & the Malerds	50

### Collegiate

1. The Terminators (SUNY COBY)	80
2. SUNY ESF Bird Nerds	69

### Low Carbon

1. Terns & Conditions	52
2. Team Sittidae	50

### Photo

1. Woodcocks	73
2. Watch the Birdie	64

### Recreational

1. Ruff Ryders	108
2. Arrogant Bustards	104
3. Tyrannus Tyrannus	90
4. The Tanagers	88
5. The Hawkeyes	85
6. Bobolinks	78
7. Fuddy Ruddies	77
8. Team Silver Wolf	76
9. Hi-lights	74
10. Aix & Cranes	72
11. Bleary-eyed Vireos	71
12. Hawkward Students	70

Thanks to all of our 2016 Donors and Sponsors, especially...



## A Note from the Planning Committee

(Linda and Steve Benedict, Chris Lajewski, Jim Eckler, Leona Lauster, Dave Robertson, Chuck Gibson, Linda Ziembra, 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;
- Bass Pro (Auburn), Nucor Steel of Auburn, ISEI Corporation (Seneca Meadows Landfill), Ducks Unlimited, Eagle Optics, Ernst Conservation Seeds, Inc., Montezuma Winery and Cayuga Lake Creamery for their generous donations;
- Additional local support from: Old Lyons Hardware, Parker's Grill, Jack Courtney photography, Charlie Rouse, Dave's Meat Market, Lt. Matt Lochner, Linda Benedict, Magee Diner, Mary Tatem, Cayuga Bird Club, Emile's Restaurant, Deer head Inn, Walmart, Brick Oven, Abigail's, Wolff's Grill, Diane Slater, 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 those that helped feed the hungry mob: Dunkin' Donuts, 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, Minetor & Co., SUNY Cobleskill, Onondaga Audubon, The Bird House, 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, Ellen Reynolds, Dave and Grace Strong, Kyle Gage, 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; Kyle Gage for his photography; and Linda Ziembra for emceeding the final ceremony.

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



## Highlights of the Day

Orange moon  
Lots of birds at Morgan Rd. Friday night  
Seeing the GBHE feeding  
Realizing that our Pine Siskin was a Muckrace first

## Quotes of the Day

I would take ONE grin, I don't need a pair.  
It's an odd duck!  
What is that?  
I was minding my own business in the Berkshires,  
when I got this phone call...  
Another \*#^\*& train  
Any warblers in there?  
What's that? (Harry) Snatch him! (Angie)

## Lowlights of the Day

3PM to 5:30PM, enough said  
Rain!  
Not getting a Rock Pigeon until 3:00PM  
Missing 3 species we had scouted the day before  
2 dog bites  
Absolutely none  
Nada



**Mark your calendar!**  
**Muckrace 2017 (#21)**  
**is Friday-Saturday**  
**September 15th-16th,**  
**7PM-7PM**  
**That's the second**  
**Friday after Labor Day**