The 22nd 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 14th at 7:00 pm, 141 birders (a new record - previous high was 135) from 30 teams stormed the Complex for a 24-hour period and successfully rustled up good looks at a diverse mix of 184 species (4 above the 5-yr average). Tallies included 25 warblers, 19 species of waterfowl and 21 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 $4,400 in funds and prizes from 30 sponsors were donated.

Good looks and listens of Sandhill Cranes in the early-morning fog were a highlight for many teams. Broad-winged Hawks, in good numbers, made a good impression on several teams, including the one feeding on a frog that the Bobolinks ran over with their car. The Tanagers picked up a rare grand slam on all 5 species of vireos.

The teams collectively identified 103 bird species that have been seen in every Muckrace! Only one species was missed that had been perennially claimed – Cliff Swallow. While no new species were added this year -- Canvasback, Northern Goshawk, Prairie and Orange-crowned Warblers, and Buff-breasted Sandpiper were relatively rare pickups. The most commonly seen birds (seen by all 30 teams) totaled 14 species in all, and included the 25+ Killdeer that claimed the MAC driveway as home.

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. In the Competitive Division,
“Lawrence’s Warbler Chasers” took home top honors for the second year in a row with 126 species. Orange-crowned Warbler, Redhead, American and Least Bittern, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Sora, Chimney Swift and Hermit Thrush were some of their rarer finds. 122 species were identified by the RBA/GVA sponsored “Birds R Us” team to give them a repeat win in the Recreation Division. The Low Carbon Division was won again by “Terns and Conditions”. The “Shutterbirds” again took home the honor of Photo Division Champions. Congratulations also to Family/Mentor Division winners “MAC Daddy and the Chicks” who completed the run on repeat winners for this year’s Muckrace with 91 species identified. Team Sittidae has the lead, at this writing, for the Fundraising Trophy, but they are getting stiff competitions from the Cayuga Bird Club’s Arrogant Bustards.

Top business sponsors for this year’s event were: Wild Birds Unlimited, Nucor Steel, Seneca Meadows, Ducks Unlimited, and Ernst Conservation Seeds. 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) 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 ($2,865), Bobolinks ($1,135), Arrogant Bustards ($873), DEC Crane-iacs ($610) and the Hawkeyes ($606).

In the 22-year Muckrace history, over $145,000 has been donated in support of wildlife habitat restoration, research or public access. Recent projects have included: Monarch Butterfly research and management, Virginia Rail research, Hidden Marsh and Loop Road wetland restoration, construction of several observation decks, Motus Radio Telemetry deployment, and support for American Black Duck winter banding. For many grant-funded projects, Muckrace Funds can be used as a critical source of ‘matching’ funds.

Many thanks to the 26 good folks who volunteered to help pull off the event, and to Kyle Gage who rounded up and organized that crew.

Save the date of September 6th and 7th for next year’s Muckrace. It doesn’t follow the exact framework that we’ve used recently due to a scheduling conflict with an important NYS Ornithological Association meeting.

Enjoy the great camaraderie and 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 websites: friendsofmontezuma.org, ny.audubon.org/Montezuma, fws.gov/refuge/montezuma/, and dec.ny.gov/outdoor/31112.html.
22nd Annual Muckrace Results:

**Competitive**
1. Lawrence’s Warbler Chasers 126
2. L & B Farm Windbirders 115
3. Mad-Capped Chickadees 101
4. Hawkward Timberdoodles 94
5. The Loon-A-Tics 91
6. Mottled Mucks 85
7. The Buffleheads 80

**Family**
1. Mac Daddy and the Chicks 91
2. Mucky Ducks 67

**Low Carbon**
1. Terns & Conditions 56

**Photo**
1. Shutterbirds 77
2. Blurgansers 43

**Recreational**
1. Birds R Us 122
2. Arrogant Bustards 115
3. DEC Crane-iacs 106
4. The Tanangers 104
5. Tyrannus Tyrannus 96
6. The Hawkeyes 95
7. Aix and Cranes 91
8. Team Duck 90
9. Lime Howlers 89
10. Bob-o-links 86
11. Team Sittidae 77
11. Koo-Koo-Ka-Choo Kaburra 77
11. Blary-eyed Vireos 77
14. Brown Thrashers 76
15. Fuddy Ruddies 70
16. Team Fonzie 68
17. Stony Point Littorals 64
18. FLCCers 52

Thanks to all of our 2018 Donors and Sponsors, especially…
A Note from the Planning Committee
(Steve Benedict, Chris Lajewski, Jim Eckler, Chuck Gibson, Linda Ziemba, Josh Bacon, 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, Montezuma Winery, Galens Pharmacy, Reliant Community FCU, Community Bank, Vortex Optics, Circle K, Mary Tatem designs, and Cayuga Lake Creamery for their generous donations;
- Additional local support from: Old Lyons Hardware, LandPro, Parker’s Grill and Tap House, Lake Drum Brewing, Magee Diner, Kinney Drugs, Cayuga Bird Club, Runnings, Thorn Farm, Seneca White Deer, Brick Oven, Ravine’s Winery, Charlie Rouse, Woffly’s Grill and Marina, Dunkin Donuts, 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.

We also appreciate all team sponsors: 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, Ellen Reynolds, Amelia Otis, Linda Potter, Susan DiCriscio, Jim Johnston, Meena Haribal, Dan Parsons, Poppy Singer, Maureen Parsons, Mike and JoAnn Tetlow, Josh Snodgrass, Janet Akin, and Linda Mott.

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; Jim Johnston, Meena Haribal and Susan DiCriscio for their photography; and Jim Eckler for emceeing the final ceremony.

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

Highlights of the Day
Being in an air-conditioned car driving around Howland Island.
4 Cranes in the fog at Carncross Rd at 7AM.
Broad-winged Hawk eating a frog we just ran over with our car.
Breaking 100 sp.

Tent City at the MAC.
Finding a pigeon after working like crazy all day to get one.

Quotes of the Day
There’s nothing conclusively interesting.
Wow, it’s quiet. Isn’t it quiet? It’s soooo quiet.
What’s that plant? It’s white snake route…it killed Abe Lincoln’s mother. Look it up.
Not enough bug dope. Never enough bug dope.

Lowlights of the Day
The long walk down Towpath.
Heat and mosquitoes.
Lack of seed in bird feeders.