



MUCKRACE MUSINGS

Volume 23 September 2019

The 23rd 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 6th at 7:00 pm, 151 birders (a new record - previous high was 141 in 2018) from 34 teams scoured the Montezuma Wetlands Complex for a 24-hour period and successfully rustled up good looks at a diverse mix of 176 species (4 below the 5-yr average and 9 below last year). Tallies included 18 warblers, 19 species of waterfowl and 20 shorebird species.

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 \$11,700 in funds and prizes from 30 sponsors were donated.

Heavy rains at sunset didn't prevent our competitive birders from getting good looks at the vagrant Laughing Gull at Knox-Marsellus Marsh. Rain again at sunrise made it tough for teams wanting to get their last-minute Screech Owl. The highlight for many teams was when clouds broke and the sun came out in the early afternoon allowing for a beautiful day of birding. Many teams had fun spishing in mixed flocks on Howland's Island picking up many warblers, sapsuckers and gnatcatchers.

The teams collectively identified 176 bird species this year! Including rare Muckrace showings of Red-shouldered Hawk, American White Pelican, Lesser Scaup and Cattle Egret. The first Muckrace sighting of Laughing Gull was recorded by several teams as well. Notable birds seen by all teams included Great Egret and American Goldfinch and all but one team saw Eastern Bluebird.

Competition and rivalries among teams adds to the comradery of the event. Bragging rights until next year's Muckrace is the most coveted prize of true Muckracers! In the Competitive Division, "The Wind Birders" took home top honors for this year with 119 species! Philadelphia Vireo, Blackpoll Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Canada Warbler, Grey-cheeked Thrush, Chimney Swift, Greater Black-backed Gull, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, were some of their rarer finds. The Canisius



2019 Quick Stats

Teams registered:	34
Total species seen:	176
Cumulative total for all Muckraces:	244
Funds raised as of September 24th:	\$10,433

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

Winning Competitive team: Wind Birders – 119 sp.
Winning Low-carbon team: Terns and Conditions – 51 sp.
Winning Recreational Team: Hovering Howland Harries – 130 sp.
Winning Family/Mentor team: Silky Flycatchers – 113 sp.
Winning Photo team: Shutterbirds – 70 sp.

Most memorable team birds:
American White Pelican, Least Bittern, Merlin, Ruddy Duck, Sandhill Cranes

New species: Laughing Gull

Notable Species NOT seen: We got almost all except: Spotted Sandpiper, Barred Owl, either bittern and the Laughing Gull, "Peeps! We need to find the peeps!"

Warbler species recorded:	20
Shorebird species recorded:	18
Waterfowl species recorded:	19



Top Collegiate Team from Canisius College: Jay Cooney, Carter Keegan, Nicole Dickan, and Shawn Moreth, Advised by Dr. Robin Foster

Top business sponsors for this year's event were: Wild Birds Unlimited (\$750), Nucor Steel (\$500), Ernst Conservation Seeds (\$250), Community Bank (\$100), Galens Pharmacy (\$100), and Reliant FCU (\$100). Over 30 additional sponsors also provided funds and prizes.

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 this year are: Arrogant Bustards with \$1900, Team Sittidae with \$1135, Wind Birders with \$600, MAC Daddy and The Chicks with \$450 and Bobolinks with \$441.

In the 23-year Muckrace history, over \$156,000 has been donated in support of habitat restoration, wildlife research or public access. Recent



Winning Recreational Team, Nick Kachala & Robert Buckert

projects have included: Pollinator research and management, Virginia Rail and Gallinule 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 19 good folks who volunteered to help pull off the event, and to Kyle Gage who rounded up and organized that crew.

Next year's Muckrace will be held the weekend after Labor Day, so save the dates of September 11th and 12th.

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.

College Turkey Vultures won the collegiate division with 56 species. After a last-minute change in registration, 130 species were recorded by the winning recreation team "Hovering Howlands Harriers" formerly "Birds R Us". Look out for these guys in the competitive division possibly next year. The Low Carbon Division was won again by "Terns and Conditions" with 51 Species. The "Shutterbirds" again took home the honor of Photo Division Champions. Congratulations also to Family/Mentor Division winners "Silky Flycatchers". The Arrogant Bustards out fundraised Team Sittidae this year and took home the Fundraising Trophy.



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.

23rd Annual Muckrace Results:

Competitive

1. Wind Birders	119
2. Cornell Catbirds	118
3. Mad-Capped Chickadees	95
4. Buffleheads	81

Collegiate

1. Canisius College Turkey Vultures	56
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Family

1. Silky Flycatchers	113
2. Mac Daddy and the Chicks	75

Low Carbon

1. Terns & Conditions	51
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Photo

1. Shutterbirds	70
2. Old Duck	63
3. Civil Warblers	62

Recreational

1. Hovering Howlan's Harries	130
2. Tyrannus Tyrannus	101
3. Hawkward Timberdoodles	101
4. Hawkeyes	101
5. The Loonatics	98
6. The Tanangers	94
7. Arrogant Bustards	91
8. Team Duck	91
9. Gull for it	91
10. Bob-O-Links	89
11. Lime Howlers	87
12. Mottled Mucks	84
13. Crane-iacs	83
14. Conway Tweety	80
15. Aix & Cranes	76
16. Team Sittidae	73
17. Fuddy Ruddies	72
18. Ruffed Grouses	72
19. Bleary-eyed Vireos	63
20. Wobbling Warblers	56
21. Wish-it-were-summer tanagers	52

Thanks to all of our 2019 Donors and Sponsors, especially...



RAVINES
WINE CELLARS



A Note from the Planning Committee

(Steve Benedict, Chris Lajewski, Jim Eckler, Chuck Gibson, Linda Ziemba, Andrea Van Beusichem, 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., Montezuma Winery, Galens Pharmacy, Reliant Community FCU, Community Bank, Mary and Tatem designs for their generous donations.
- Additional local support from: Old Lyons Hardware, LandPro, Brick Oven Restaurant, Thorn Farm, Ducks Unlimited, Parkers Bar and Grill, Ravine's Winery, Charlie Rouse, Chuck Gibson, Sarah Fleming, Mike Schummer, and, last but not least...
- The Friends Nature Store at The Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge Visitor Center and the Montezuma Audubon Center 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), The Bird House, Chemung Valley Audubon Society, Ben Harvey, Eaton Birding Society, Audubon NY, Capital Tiles Services, FLCC Student Corp, Finger Lakes Coffee Roasters, Rochester Birding Association, and the Cayuga Bird Club.

We could not have done it without all our great event volunteers: Ruth & Don Kalen, Donna Richardson, Gretchen Schauss, Leona Lauster, Margaret Gage, Ellen Reynolds, Sabrina Megali, Susan DiCriscio, Meena Haribal, Mike and JoAnn Tetlow, Gary Calabrese, Mark Brown, Pete Saracino, Josh Snodgrass, 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; NY DEC, FOTMWC and the MAC for [covering](#) printing and mailing costs; Meena Haribal and Susan DiCriscio for their photography; and Chris Lajewski for emceeding the final ceremony.

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



Highlights of the Day

Flushing a snipe while listening for owls at Giancarelli Grassland.

Variety of waterfowl at Crane Unit.

Seeing a Black-crowned Night Heron over Crusoe Creek.

Cowbird on a horse.

Midday Warblers.

Watching a Screech Owl call loudly.

Least Bittern at Coot Pond on H.I.

Tent City at the MAC.

Flushing a Merlin out of a small ash tree on Carncross Road.

Quotes of the Day

"Birds don't find that attractive."

"Can you count a bird if it's dead?"

"So where to next"- repeated continuously.

"We're going to see that pelican, because it's a pelican not a pelican't" "Is she still sleeping?"

"Peeps! we need to find peeps!" "Darn Bugs" "Is Jack late to his first Muckrace?"

Lowlights of the Day

Birds were quiet.

Missing a Spotted Sandpiper.

Rain at Sunset and Sunrise.

Rain in Tent after missteps during set-up.



**Mark your calendar!
Muckrace 2020 (#24)
is Friday-Saturday
September 11th-12th,
7PM-7PM
That's the first Friday after
Labor Day**