

# Birdathons A Great Success - Again

By Shirley Hartman



DAVID J. MILLER

The Beaverkill birdathon team searches for a Scarlet Tanager.

This year's Birdathons proved to be a tremendous success. Audubon New York was fortunate to have committed individuals and chapters who generated over \$120,000 for the organization. Numerous sponsors, including Central Westchester Audubon Society and Hudson River Audubon Society, dedicated their proceeds to Audubon New York. Five Birdathons that generated significant revenues (and event better stories) are highlighted below.

## May 8 - New York City:

The New York City Birdathon was sponsored by Marian Heiskell, Virginia K. Stowe, Oakes and Louise Ames, Margot Ernst, Samuel Pryor, and David Miller. Others who joined the New York City crew included Erin Gray, Barbara Mosbacher, Andy Gershon, Douglas Stowe, and Lynn Tiede.

The day was led by Michael Burger, Jay Tehan, Shirley Hartman and Sandy Doring. Starting in Central Park — with a stop to speak with David Sibley and later to Wendy Paulson in the Ramble — the group moved to Jamaica

Bay and in total identified 106 species. Highlights of the day included a Black-Crowned Night Heron that stood motionless at the Turtle Pond while Louise and Gini briefed a group of visiting school children about the species.

## May 16 - Albany:

Audubon New York staff was joined by Bob Budliger for a ten-hour event that took us from Black Creek Marsh through western Albany County and to the Hudson River. With a slow start, and the determination that we were not allowed to count the Bobwhite singing from a cage, the staff identified 107 species.

## May 18 - Constitution Marsh:

Alex Zagoreos and Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff sponsored a team of birders for a mini-Birdathon that completed the Boardwalk dedication. Shirley Hartman, Mike Burger, Rich Anderson, Eric Lind and Ralph Odell hiked Iona Island and Doodletown Road and uncovered 98 species. Highlights included the Peregrine Falcon swooping in on an unsuspecting Mourning Dove (both species were counted).

## May 19 - Beaverkill and Bashakill:

John and Patricia Adams, Ned Ames and Jane Sokolow and John and Mia Wilkinson and David J. Miller sponsored the second annual Beaverkill



KIMBERLEY L. RAY

Members of the Albany birdathon team take a break to pose for a picture.

Birdathon. Several area supporters joined us on a foggy morning that yielded numerous warblers and a Ruffed Grouse (which I still think was a horse stomping his foot). After a quick barbeque Mike Burger, Mitch Hartley, Shirley, Paul and Tyler Hartman all headed to the Bashakill where a Blue-Winged Warbler sat perched on an outside branch for all to see.

## May 19 - New York City and North:

Andy Gershon and his fearless crew (the Flavescent Bulbuls) visited nearly every birding site known to man from the Far Rockaways to Buttercup Farm. An impressive 140 species were found and an even more impressive birdathon report was drafted and distributed.

## Central Park Ramble with David Sibley *continued from page 9*

Yep, we were giddy from the charming setting, the good company, and the sheer glee that the birds aroused in us all.

Moments later, a startlingly handsome purple race Common Grackle landed on the bridge, only eight feet away. I greatly admired Sibley's suggestion that we take this opportunity to study the bird. Often people dismiss grackles as pests and don't appreciate their iridescent musculature. So, several of us raised our binoculars and enjoyed the bird's rich plumage and piercing eyes. After a good minute the bird flew, not away, but towards us. Yep, the grackle flew onto a branch no more than three-and-a-half feet above us and curiously cocked its head. Sibley slowly raised his hand. The group hushed. The grackle craned its neck lower. Just when we thought the bird would touch Sibley's fingertips, it flew back to the bridge. Then he looked us over but not for long. In a flash, the bird flew to the ground and enjoyed the surprise stash of seeds and nuts that one of the participants had in her knapsack.

Toward the end of our walk, which Sibley peppered with delightful bird facts on song, behavior, and migration, we stopped along a narrow section of the lake. There, teetering on a half-submerged log was, for many, the first Northern Waterthrush of the spring season. The grainy textures and muted hues along the waters surface made a picturesque background for the bobbing waterthrush as it ambled along the muddy rim of the lake. After admiring the bird Sibley said: "That's what's so amazing about this park. I was just thinking that this would be a perfect environment for a waterthrush and then there is one." Imagine his delight when we looked across the water and, on a spit of soil at the base of a tall boulder, he saw not only a Swamp Sparrow, but another Northern Waterthrush.

As if that wasn't fun enough, we heard a loud cackle and turned our heads. Well, guess who showed up? Our friend the Common Grackle flew in low and landed near Sibley again. Well, that just about cracked us up. So curious was the grackle that we told

Sibley we were on to his secret. We were convinced that he had paid for the grackle's performance. On that humorous note, we mostly ended our lovely walk and sauntered back to the castle, occasionally stopping to listen to a song while chitchatting about, what else, birds? Yes, birds...everything is birds.

### Guess Who Wrote This...

#### A PASSING THOUGHT

Floating silently away;  
Further and further with nothing to say.  
A majestic silhouette that mellows to a spot;  
A speck in the sky that is beyond the cloud tops.  
Gone it was from all of our sight;  
But not the memory of the Bald Eagle's might.  
For an eagle may provide a passing thought;  
Which in turn sparks dreams to be sought.

The first one to correctly guess the author of this poem **wins a free birding guide**. Send your guess to Audubon New York, 200 Trillium Lane, Albany, NY 12203. Entries must be posted by November 1, 2001. No phone calls or e-mail entries will be accepted. The answer and winner will be revealed in the next issue of the *Audubon Advocate*.

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