

# Birds and Breakfast – Central Park, NYC

By Nina Whiting

NEW YORK CITY. The Big Apple. Eleven million people crammed onto an island roughly 12 miles long and 3 miles wide. And each spring and fall it gets a little more crowded.

Every spring and fall, Central Park—the jewel of New York City—welcomes birds of all sizes, shapes, colors and calls as one of the major “refueling” stops along the migratory path of many North American bird species.

Birds and Breakfast was launched this spring by Audubon New York, in conjunction with the National Audubon Society. The series was intended to introduce novice birders to the joys of rising in the hushed early hours of the morning and touring Central Park’s Ramble, binoculars in hand, searching for an elusive species or two. Led by National Audubon’s Director of Planned Giving Wayne Mones, and Development Officer Aaron Virgin, Birds and Breakfast combined hour-long walks through the park at the height of the spring and fall migration, followed by a light breakfast and short discussions of various birding topics. Subjects ranged from which types of binoculars would be best for the novice birder to purchase, to the characteristics of a type of bird recently seen in the park, to recognizing birds by song. An average of 25 people, all Audubon members, attended the weekly outings that began in late April and ended in mid-June, followed by fall meetings that ran from the end of August to mid-October.

As a newcomer to birding, Kirsten Major took advantage of one Birds and Breakfast outing. “Having not done much birding before, I was interested to see what the fuss was all about. I found Central Park was a different place at 7:00am, filled with wildlife that I had never really noticed before. It was remarkable. And I got a free breakfast, which wasn’t bad either.”

Initially intended to be an introductory birding course, Birds and Breakfast quickly became a way to spread the word about Audubon and its mission, and attract not only birders, but contributors as well. At each breakfast discussion, Wayne Mones would remind the group of the work that Audubon is doing, on the local, state and national levels, and that without the support of people like those in attendance, Audubon could not accomplish many of the goals it had set for itself.

“I met several people who received our magazine but were not aware of all the work that Audubon is doing”, said Heather Hanson, a Major Gifts Officer for Audubon New York. “After attending a Birds and Breakfast event, they were eager to learn more and were considering becoming more involved, both financially and otherwise. The also were eager to bring a friend along for the next meeting.”

For its inaugural year, Birds and Breakfast was a success. Next spring we will meet again at the Loeb Boathouse, so come one, come all—and bring a friend!

## Catherine Sandell Working Hard to Document the Story of Montezuma’s Shorebirds

By Jillian Liner

CATHERINE SANDELL’S interest in birds first took flight while in graduate school at Northern Illinois University where she obtained a MS degree in outdoor education. She attributes her passion for birds to a bird feeder outside her room and the Red-headed Woodpeckers she watched at a nearby river. “I love watching the behaviors of birds, but seeing a new bird or reading about them in a book isn’t what birding is about for me. It’s more about watching and learning by observation,” she adds, “I don’t keep a life list or anything.”

Catherine is one of Audubon New York’s Important Bird Area (IBA) volunteers and has been an Audubon member since 1972. For the past three years she has been the lead volunteer for Audubon New York’s Montezuma fall shorebird survey. Originally from New Mexico, Catherine moved to New York seven years ago for a job with the Girl Scouts. When she arrived

she wasted no time in contacting the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge and the American Birding Association to learn about local bird conservation efforts in her new community. She currently volunteers with six bird monitoring programs: the New York Breeding Bird Atlas, Audubon’s Christmas Bird Count, Audubon New York’s IBA program, Grouse and Woodcock monitoring, and a MAPS banding station.

“Monitoring allows me to observe things about birds that I might not otherwise see,” Catherine explains, “like Peregrine Falcons at May’s Point flying in at tree level to hunt over the marsh, rather than approaching from high in the sky.” But, Catherine has found that the most important aspect of her fall survey is documenting the numbers of common birds. “The importance of Montezuma is the number of common species using the site year after year, not the occasional occurrence of a rare species.”

Since shorebirds are Catherine’s favorite group of birds, she not only jumped at the opportunity to participate in the Audubon New York Montezuma shorebird surveys, she offered to do the entire survey herself. She loves the challenges involved with identifying shorebirds, but admits that it can be tricky counting the hundreds of peeps that come into May’s Point each fall. This past year she started using a hand held clicker to make it easier, and is considering bringing a voice recorder next year.

Evenings at Montezuma bring beautiful sunsets, hundreds of swallows, and numerous Black Crowned Night Herons. It’s a time of day at the marsh that Catherine cherishes the most. “For the past three years I have spent the evening of September 11th at May’s Point. There is no better place to be on that day than there,” she explains.

Above all, Catherine finds that monitoring offers her an opportunity

to give something back to the environment, “It is really rewarding to take my interest and skills in bird identification and put it towards something productive.”

Audubon New York thanks Catherine for all the effort that she has put into the Montezuma shorebird

survey; the survey would not be what it is without her. To learn more about how to get involved in monitoring projects in your area, contact Jillian Liner, IBA Coordinator, Audubon New York ([jliner@audubon.org](mailto:jliner@audubon.org)).

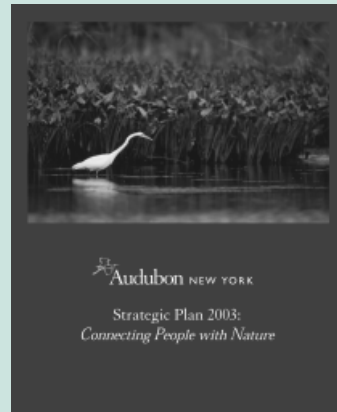


JUDY SMITH

Catherine Sandell, one of Audubon New York’s Important Bird Area (IBA) volunteers.

## Strategic Plan 2003:

### Connecting People with Nature



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Visit [http://ny.audubon.org/strategic\\_plan\\_2003](http://ny.audubon.org/strategic_plan_2003) to share our vision of conservation successes and a better quality of life for all of us.