



Meadowlark

The Newsletter of Genesee Valley Audubon Society
January-February 2017 Vol. 45, No. 1

President's Column by June Summers, President of GVAS

International Joint Commission moves ahead with Plan 2014

On December 12, 2016, the Commissioners of the International Joint Commission (IJC) signed an updated order of approval for the regulation of water levels and flows in Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. This is an event that Genesee Valley Audubon Society and other environmental groups have spent 12 years working and waiting for.

The updated order makes it possible for the IJC to approve Plan 2014, a new regulatory plan for determining the flows through the Moses-Saunders Dam located on the St. Lawrence River between Cornwall, Ontario and Massena, New York. The updated order and plan replace an outdated system of regulating flows developed in the 1950s.

"Plan 2014 is a modern plan for managing water levels and flows that will restore the health and diversity of coastal wetlands, perform better under changing climate conditions and continue to protect against extreme high and low water levels," said US Section Chair Lana Pollack.

"We are pleased that Plan 2014 will bring system-wide improvements, with consideration of ecosystem health and recreational boating along with shoreline communities, commercial navigation and hydropower production," said Canadian Section Chair Gordon Walker.

Plan 2014 will continue to protect shoreline property and will retain, essentially unchanged, the environmental conditions and coastal protections on the lower St. Lawrence River, below the Moses-

Saunders Dam. The plan will improve ecosystem health and diversity on Lake Ontario and the upper St. Lawrence River and provide net economic benefits. Allowing for more natural variations of water levels, the plan will foster the conditions needed to restore 26,000 hectares (64,000 acres) of coastal wetlands and improve habitat for fish and wildlife. The plan will also frequently extend the recreational boating season, better maintain system-wide levels for navigation, and increase hydropower production.

Plan 2014 is the result of more than 16 years of scientific study, public engagement, and governmental review. During the five-year Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study (2000-2006), technical experts and stakeholders together built evaluation models and tested hundreds of alternatives, with extensive public participation throughout the process.

The signing follows the concurrence by the Governments of Canada and the United States on amendments to the IJC's order of approval, which specifies the conditions and criteria that must be met when setting the flow through the Moses-Saunders Dam and other control works located between Cornwall, Ontario and Massena, New York.

The International Joint Commission was established under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to help the United States and Canada prevent and resolve disputes over the use of the waters the two countries share. Its responsibilities include

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Programs

JANUARY PROGRAM

Plants for Birds

Tuesday, January 24, 2017, 7:30 pm

Brighton Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room

2300 Elmwood Avenue, Brighton

In the fall of 2016 The National Audubon Society launched its **Plants For Birds** program, a campaign designed to help inform and encourage individuals and communities to grow native plants that benefit wildlife.

By adding native plants in one's yard, balcony, container garden, or public space, individuals can not only attract more birds but give them the best chance of survival in a modern landscape of fragmented habitat, and in the face of climate change. Gardens are outdoor sanctuaries that, with some careful plant choices, can be a vital recharge station for birds passing through. Birds depend on native plants for food, shelter, and places to nest. Most landscaping plants available in nurseries are exotic species from other countries. Many are prized for qualities that make them poor food sources for native birds—like having leaves that are unpalatable to insects and caterpillars they feed on. With 96 percent of all terrestrial bird species in North America feeding insects to their young, planting insect-proof exotic plants means a scarcity of food. We can help migratory birds by putting at least a few native plant species in your yard.

Join us while we discuss planning your garden and explore navigating the NAS Native Plant data base, <http://www.audubon.org/native-plants>.

FEBRUARY PROGRAM

Grassland Bird Communities

Tuesday February 28, 2017, 7:30 pm

Brighton Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room

2300 Elmwood Avenue, Brighton

Greg Lawrence, Graduate Research Assistant at The College of Brockport, SUNY, will share his research project on island grassland communities in the St. Lawrence River corridor. Greg has worked as Wildlife Technician for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation doing grassland bird surveys across Western New York. Greg is working on his Masters in Environmental Science at SUNY Brockport and finished his BS in Terrestrial & Aquatic Ecology in 2015.

MARCH PROGRAM

Tuesday, March 28, 2017, 7:30 pm

Brighton Town Hall, Downstairs Meeting Room

2300 Elmwood Avenue, Brighton

During spring migration, certain songbirds hit the road with more fat than they need to survive their long and treacherous journeys. It's a diet plan that has intrigued scientists for decades. Now, a recent study may have found the reason for that extra chub: Birds, it seems, plump up so that when it comes time for breeding, they can afford the energetic cost of making babies.



Mark Deutschlander, a biologist at Hobart and William Smith Colleges and the team, which was led by graduate student Jennalee Holzschuh, obtained and analyzed data from 12 different warbler species—including Black-throated Blue, Nashville, and Yellow-rumped Warblers—that were caught between 1999 and 2012 at the Braddock Bay Bird Observatory in Hilton, New York. The station is located near the birds' breeding location in the boreal forests of Canada.

When measuring fat deposits and scaled mass indexes (similar to body mass indexes), the scientists found that females consistently have higher fat and energy reserves than males. They detected the biggest difference in Blackpoll Warblers; female Blackpolls averaged 18 percent more weight than males. This makes sense biologically, given that it takes much more energy to produce eggs than sperm.

Based on calculations from the mass indexes, scientists also found that both sexes stored more energy in spring than in fall. Like females, males also need to prepare for the breeding season: "They guard territories vigilantly, singing songs at the top of their lungs for hours on end," Deutschlander says. "That's why we think they're in better shape when they arrive in spring than when they leave in the fall."

In addition, the analysis found that 11 of the 12 studied species were richer in energy after arriving later in the season, rather than a few weeks early. This contradicts the theory of using fat as backup fuel in case food is not yet available.

So does this finding mean fatter birds have better, more-frequent sex? Not necessarily. But they do know if they want tons of babies, they'd better keep feasting.

Our speaker will be Jennalee Holzschuh.

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considering applications for projects that affect the natural levels and flows of boundary waters, such as the control works at Cornwall, Ontario and Massena, New York. For more information, visit the Commission's website at www.ijc.org.

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, 12/13/16

In December Congress passed a wide-ranging water infrastructure bill which allocated up to \$170 million for Flint, Michigan. It also included significant funding for Great Lakes harbor maintenance and pollution cleanup, and language meant to guard against any attempt to redirect the money toward other projects.

The \$10 billion Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act passed in the U.S. Senate on Saturday, Dec. 10, 2016, immediately after the continuing resolution vote that avoided a government shutdown.

The WIIN bill authorizes the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) at \$300 million a year through 2021, dedicates Great Lakes port maintenance funding, and strengthens programs for restoring and protecting fish and wildlife. The GLRI funds state and local projects that combat invasive species, restore wildlife habitats and clean up watersheds polluted by a Rust Belt economic legacy across the eight-state Great Lakes region. GLRI funds were used for the restoration project in Braddock Bay.

The GLRI took flight under President Barack Obama, but the program framework was developed under President George W. Bush. The program has tackled more than 3,000 projects since inception. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funnels project money to various federal, state and local entities.

Field Trips

Valentines Walk in the Woods

Saturday, February 11, 2017, 9:30 am

Joni & Jon Dubner will be leading a hike (no more than 2 hours) in Mendon Ponds Park. Come get up close and personal with nature. We will hand-feed wild songbirds (chickadees, nuthatches, and titmice) while



enjoying the park. Fun for your sweetheart and the whole family! All are welcome to participate in this outdoor adventure on Saturday, February 11, 2017.

We will meet at 9:30 am in the Nature Center

Parking lot on Pond Rd off of Clover St (the southernmost of the 3 park entrances off Clover).

Dress for the weather (wear boots, warm clothes, etc.). Seed will be provided – donation optional.

Short-eared Owls and Winter Raptors Field Trip

Saturday, February 18, 2017, 3:00 p.m.

270 East Main Street, Avon, NY 14414

This trip is designed for beginners to help you sharpen your identification skills on wintering hawks and Short-eared Owls. Other wintering birds such as Horned Larks, Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs are often present. Experienced birders are welcome, please bring your spotting scopes. Meet at the Tops Plaza in Avon — on Routes 5 and 20, two miles west of I-390 — at 3:30 p.m. Dress warmly. Contact Lisa at 585-899-9616 or June 585-865-6047, if you have any questions.

Great Backyard Bird Count February 17-20, 2017

Birdwatchers of all ages count birds to create a real time snapshot of where the birds are. Take part in a multi-national bird count. Spend as much or as little time as you want. Instructions are at gbbc.birdcount.org.

See results from 2016, and view maps and results by county, state, or country. Get tips on how to ID tricky species.

Fun for the entire family!

Genesee Valley Audubon Society

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P.O. Box 15512, Rochester, NY 14615-0512

GVAS: A chapter of the National Audubon Society

The vision of Genesee Valley Audubon Society (GVAS) is to promote environmental conservation. Our mission is to educate and advocate for protection of the environment, focusing on birds, wildlife and habitat.

Keep up-to-date with our web site, www.gvaudubon.org

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The Meadowlark is published the 1st of September, November, January, March, and April. Articles for the Meadowlark should be submitted four weeks prior to the date of publication. Send articles to Joanne Mitchell, 169 Black Walnut Dr., Rochester, NY 14615, or at jwmitchell@rochester.rr.com.

Meadowlark staff: *Editor & Layout*, Joanne Mitchell; *Business Editor*, vacant; *Printing*, Minuteman Press; *Distribution*, vacant.

Winterfest

Sunday, January 15, 2017, 11 am – 3 pm
Mendon Pond Park, Rt.65/Clover St

Join GVAS at the Nature Center on Pond Rd. to take a walk to feed the Black-capped Chickadees, learn about how they survive the winter and do much more. Winterfest is designed for you to experience and do different sports and enjoy the outdoors.

For more information consult the Monroe County Park web site, <http://www2.monroecounty.gov/parks-winterfest>.

Follow Genesee Valley Audubon Society on Facebook for program and field trip reminders and much more.