

Meadowlark

The Newsletter of Genesee Valley Audubon Society
March-April 2019 Vol. 46, No. 4

President's Column

By June Summers

The Galapagos Islands

Recently I took the trip of a lifetime to the Galapagos Islands off the coast of South America. The Galapagos Islands are a National Park of Ecuador, located 500 mile out in the Pacific. They are known for the giant tortoises that live there and many other unique animals. These animals have had to adapt to severe conditions on the islands.

We arrived on the islands in the first week of November near the end of their dry season. It was striking how dry and desert like the islands looked. The Galapagos are an archipelago made by ancient volcanic activity. We walked across lava flows that are only a few hundred years old and looked at cinder cones that are thousands of years old.

If you think about it, you have to ask yourself if these islands were created by volcanic action, where did the animals come from? Each animal has a different story but most of them were either blown off course or floated on mats of vegetation from the mainland.

There are a number of sea birds that nest on the islands and fish around them: Blue-footed Boobies, Red-billed Tropicbird, Magnificent Frigatebirds, Flightless Cormorants, and White-vented Storm-Petrel. These birds spend most of their life at sea so their use of the islands is not a surprise.

Then there are the small passerines on the islands, particularly Darwin's finches. As it turns out they

aren't finches at all but tanagers. The tanager species arrived on the islands about 2 million years ago. Over the centuries depending on the island and the habitat, these birds adapted. One bird species adapting or evolving into several different birds is called adaptive radiation. Adaptive radiation happens most frequently in isolated population such as those on remote islands. The original tanager evolved into Large, Medium, and Small Ground-Finches depending on the size of the seeds they ate. They also evolved into the Genovesa Cactus Finch, the Green Warbler-Finch, and more.

A bird you might not expect to see on islands that are on the equator are penguins. The Galapagos Penguin is one of the smallest penguins in the world; half a meter long, it only stands about 35 cm tall, about a foot. The ancestors of the Galapagos Penguins probably ended up on the islands riding the Pacific Humbolt Current from the south.

The giant Galapagos Tortoise probably drifted from the mainland about 1 million years ago. Their ancestors were gigantic tortoises that roamed the mainland starting 70 to 80 million years ago. Over time the tortoises established about 16 separate populations on ten of the largest Galapagos Islands. On some island the tortoises developed long necks to be able to eat leaves farther up on bushes

while on other islands they developed large domed shells to hold more fat and water. In the 16th and 17th centuries ships loaded the tortoises on board as a source of food. Today only 10 species survive.

It is a magical place to be, with creatures that live only on the Galapagos.



June and Drew Summers, with friend

Programs

March Program

Rochester People's Climate Coalition

Tuesday, March 26, 2019, 7:30 pm

Brighton Town Hall, Downstairs meeting room

2300 Elmwood Ave., Brighton

Abigail McHugh-Grifa from the Rochester People's Climate Coalition is going to tell us about what the Coalition is doing to help protect the climate. She will discuss their heating and cooling technology project for the region, part of their sustainable home initiative.

April Program

Evening Walk on the Brickyard Trail

Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 7:00 pm

Brighton Town Hall Parking lot near the Library

2300 Elmwood Ave., Brighton

Last year we had a great time on the early spring walk along the Brickyard Trail across the street from the Brighton Town Hall. Last year we saw green herons and red-tailed hawks. This short walk of about a mile and a half round trip will give us a chance to explore an urban wetland at dusk. Who knows what else we will find.

Make sure to wear a warm coat, shoes and gloves. Call June for information and to let us know you are coming if possible, 585-865-6047.

Birders Needed to Monitor Cranberry Pond

We need volunteer birders this spring and for several years to come to monitor marsh birds at Cranberry Pond in Braddock Bay Fish and Wildlife Management Area. By establishing a baseline population this year we will be able to see how the marsh bird populations change in the years after the restoration projects are completed.

GVAS and Audubon New York don't have the details of how many times you will need to do the survey or where they will be done exactly yet, but we will be nailing that down soon.

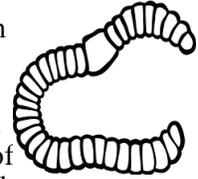
Contact June Summers if you are interested at summers@frontiernet.net.



Jumping Worms: a comical name for a serious threat

by Loretta Morrell

Also known as crazy worms, jumping worms entered the United States through Asia. They may have hitchhiked in on imported horticulture or possibly were shipped in as fishing bait. These worms earn their names because they can jump out of your hand, they writhe wildly if disturbed, and they can even detach the end of their tail if they feel threatened.



Appearance-wise the difference between the invasive European earth worms is most obvious if you look at the clitellum. This is the round band that is raised and pink on the common night crawler. On the jumping worm the clitellum encircling the body is smooth and cloudy white to gray in color. The reproduction rate is also more aggressive, and they are out-reproducing other species of worms.

Worms are loved by gardeners because they break down the nutrients in the biodegradable matter in our gardens and lawns and aerate the soil, helping flowers and vegetables and grass grow without the use of fertilizers. The jumping worm is a worm on steroids. It will devour ALL the organic matter it encounters, be it leaf litter, rotting produce or plant roots. Its castings are abundant, and have the appearance of coffee grounds. In the colder climates the adults die off, but the offspring lie dormant in cocoons that closely resemble grain of dirt. These cocoons can be easily overlooked when transporting equipment, mulch, trail bikes, hiking shoes, garden tools, or potted plants. They have been found in most states and habitats ranging from rural forests to suburban backyards to urban parks.

Cornell Cooperative Extension warns that in areas of heavy infestation, native plants, soil invertebrates, salamanders, birds and other animals may decline. Soil conditions can be altered to the point that it is more difficult for native plants to thrive, making it easier for invasive species to spread.

Continued on back page

Field Trips

Braddock Bay Raptor Research Bird of Prey Days

May 3 - 5, 2019

Braddock Bay Park, 199 E. Manitou Rd.
Bird of Prey Days has owl prowls, live birds, games for kids, bird of prey migration, and so much more. GVAS will have our displays there. Please come see us and enjoy this great experience.

For more information go to <https://bbrr.org/bird-of-prey-days/>.

Montezuma Audubon Center's Wildlife Festival

May 4, 2019, 10:00 am – 3:00 pm

2295 NY-89, Savannah, NY

The Wildlife Festival has live animals, a native plant vendor, chainsaw demo, exhibitors and vendors. Check out their web site <http://ny.audubon.org/education/montezuma-audubon-center-programs-and-events> for more information.

Thursday Evening Hikes at Shadow Pines

March 21, 6:30 pm, April 18, 6:30 pm
and May 16, 7:00 pm

Join us for a fun nature walk through this new nature area. Meet in the parking lot behind the Clark House enter from Whalen Rd. Call Lisa McKeown, 585-899-9616, for information.

Volunteer Opportunities

Inaturalist.org/City

GVAS will be joining the Seneca Park Zoo Society collecting data for the Inaturalist.org City Nature Challenge, April 26 -29. The City Nature Challenge is an international event where people find and document plants and wildlife in cities across the globe: a bioblitz-style competition where metro areas are in a contest against each other to see who can make the most observations of nature, who can find the most species, and who can engage the most people.

1ST SUNDAY NATURE WALKS

The first Sunday of every month GVAS will host a nature walk through a local park. Join our adventure as we stroll through the park looking for birds and other wildlife. See the beauty that nature has to offer. We will visit a different location each month. Listed below are upcoming walks:



March 3 and April 7, 2019, 9:00 am, Shadow Pines Park in Penfield

Join us for a fun nature walk through this new nature area. Meet in the parking lot behind the Clark House enter from Whalen Rd. Call Lisa McKeown, 585-899-9616, for more information.

Birds at the Brew House

May 5, 2019, 9:00 am

GVAS is joining the Genesee Land Trust for a walk from High Falls to Broad St. We will be looking for the birds in the river gorge and the Peregrine Falcons. You will be surprised what we find.

We will meet at the Genesee Brew House on 25 Cataract St, at 9:00 am. Don't forget to bring your binoculars.

Register at <https://www.geneseeandtrust.org/master-calendar/2019/5/5/birdsatthebrewhouse>

Follow GVAS on Facebook or Twitter for updates or email Lisa at lisamck0503@gmail.com. Also feel free to call or text Lisa at 585-899-9616.

There is nature all around us, even in our cities! Knowing what species are in our city and where they are helps us study and protect them, but the ONLY way to do that is by all of us - scientists, land managers, and the community - working together to find and document the nature in our area. By participating in the City Nature Challenge, not only do you learn more about your local nature, but you can also make your city a better place - for you and other species!

We need volunteers in the city and throughout the county who can take pictures of plants and animals large and small and then upload the picture and the name of the organism.

You will need to download the Inaturalist.org app on your phone to be able to participate. We will have more information about the City Nature Challenge on our Facebook page closer to the event.

Genesee Valley Audubon Society

Meadowlark

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.

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

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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.

Jumping worms, continued from page 2

We can each do our part to slow down the threat of jumping worms. The easiest thing is to refuse to purchase them for bait or composting. Make sure any compost that you use has been heated. Take the time to clean vehicles, equipment, yard tools, and hiking boots before moving from site to site. When purchasing or sharing new plantings, choose bare root stock.

To check your lawns or growing beds prepare a mixture of 1/3 cup ground yellow mustard seed and a gallon of water. Pour it slowly into the soil. Worms will surface. This mixture will not hurt plants. If you find jumping worms, report it to: nymapinvasives.org. Avoid moving plants or soil from your yard. Bag any jumping worms you find. Place them in the sun for a minimum of ten minutes, and then throw them in with your trash.

Sources:

<http://ccetompkins.org/resources/jumping-worm-fact-sheet>

<https://extension.unh.edu/blog/invasive-spotlight-jumping-worms>