

THE LINNAEAN
NEWS



LETTER

Volume 65, Number 8/9

January/February 2012

RICHARD FRIED SETS NEW YORK BIG YEAR RECORD

Helen Hays

How many people after birding for just three years would undertake a personal big year and then surpass the record number of birds seen in New York State in a year? Even with Jacob Drucker's help it would be difficult, but that is exactly what Richard Fried did in 2011. He was tremendously enthusiastic and focused – his wife, Stella, termed it “obsessive-compulsive”. I met him in his office to interview him for this article and asked him how he began birding. As it turned out, it was kind of an accident. When his daughter Lila was fourteen she began birding with Jacob Drucker, an expert young birder in New York City. Richard decided the only way he would see his daughter for any length of time would be to drive them when they went birding. He began doing this in 2007. By 2008 he started to take an interest in birding himself. As we talked, he mentioned some birds they missed. In 2008, although he missed the Le Conte's Sparrow Doug Gochfeld discovered at Plum Beach, Brooklyn birding in the area opened his eyes to the birding potential of urban sites. In 2009, chasing and missing an Ivory Gull in Plymouth, MA was just part of birding and fortunately did not discourage him mainly because of the rich selection of winter waterfowl he saw instead.



Once Richard began birding Jacob mentored him. Jacob has been birding since he was six and could identify a bird to subspecies that appeared only as a brown flash to Richard! He also learned a great deal from birding walks with Deborah Allen and Bob DeCandido in Central Park, Jeff Nulle in Riverside Park and workshops at Cape May.

In 2010, while walking with Joe Giunta in Central Park looking for warblers, Joe talked about a birding challenge of seeing 200 species in New York in a year. By the end of May, Richard had 200. By the end of the year he had 269 seen in the state. In 2010 he birded both in and outside of New York: Texas, California, Puerto Rico (where he saw nineteen endemics in three days), and Japan that summer with Lila. He attended workshops at Cape May and participated in a hawk watch there.

In 2011 he initially set a goal of 300 birds for the year, tightened his belt and began moving. He started out with a big jump in his list during the Southern Nassau Christmas Bird Count on January 1, followed by sightings on January 5 of a Tufted Duck at Cold Spring Harbor, Lark Sparrow at Calverton, Glaucous Gull at Orient, Redheads at Coney Island Creek, and Black-headed Gulls in Brooklyn. When he wasn't birding with Lila and Jacob, he birded mostly with his good friend and excellent Brooklyn birder, Rob Bate. Richard does not consider birding a solitary sport. He likes birding with other people and wanted to see as many birds as possible in 2011. He travelled 25,000 miles and used 1300 gallons of gas. (His one regret for the year was his carbon footprint.) He birded during most of his free time, before work, after work, and was on call to drive whatever distance was necessary to see a rarity. He often birded for five days in a row and with two to three hours of sleep a night. He and Rob did several five-day bird trips upstate. Richard and his wife curtailed their out of state travel and took only a single vacation of one week to Maine during the summer. Since he has his own veterinary practice he had a certain amount of flexibility with his hours, but still he had to push hard.

People throughout the state helped him as he covered thirty-two of New York's sixty-two counties. Shai Mitra gave him essential advice on identifying terns at Cupsogue on Long Island, Willie D'Anna shared his expertise with gulls on the Niagara Frontier, Angus Wilson with pelagic species, and Joan Collins

offered advice on finding boreal birds in the Adirondacks. He saw more birds in Suffolk County than in any other; Manhattan (New York County) contributed the second most. He visited the Adirondacks three times; the Niagara River and Lake Ontario shore four times and Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge about half a dozen times, in addition to trips to Fort Drum in the spring and the North Country in the winter. He and Rob posted to eBird, kept track of sightings, and monitored all the regional birding listservs in the state. On December 3, Richard and Rob picked up Greg Lawrence, the president of the New York City Young Birders Club and drove to the Niagara Falls. Willie D'Anna alerted them to a Slaty-backed Gull on the Ontario side of the river. They crossed to Ontario, found the bird and watched it fly out of sight down the river. They looked for the bird for the next two days but did not see it again. On December 5 Richard and Rob drove Greg back to Rochester and continued on to Montezuma. There Richard received a text message from Greg that Jim Pawlicki had refound the Slaty-back. They headed back to Niagara Falls and spent the following day searching for the gull. At Sunset they saw it fly over Goat Island on the American side of the river. Triumphant, they added it to the list and headed for Long Lake in the Adirondacks.

Richard did six pelagic trips during the year. In March he went on one of Paul Guris's *See Life Paulagics* trips out of Freeport, Long Island. There were two trips on John Shemilt's boat: one in August and one in November. On the November trip John, Richard, and Angus Wilson were the only participants. It was particularly exciting for Richard as it yielded one of his favorite birds of the year, a South Polar Skua. Other birds seen on the trip included Northern Fulmar, Great, Cory's, and Manx Shearwaters, Black-legged Kittiwake, Pomarine Jaeger, and Red Phalarope. In December Paul Guris suggested he go with the *Captain Lou Fleet* in Freeport to get out to deep water to find alcids. He went on three of these overnight trips to Hudson Canyon.

During the last quarter of 2011, Richard realized he had a chance of tying or beating the New York year record of 350 birds set by Scott Whittle in 2008. Richard saw his 300th bird in July, New York's first Gray-hooded Gull found in Coney Island, Brooklyn. His record breaking 351st was the Mountain Bluebird found by Lenore Swenson and Diana Teta on December 26 at Calverton, Long Island. The bird was posted that Monday on the local listservs. Richard cancelled his appointments and went to look for it the following morning. Shai Mitra called it as it flew in and Richard checked off number 351! On his final pelagic trip on December 30 he noted Common Murre, number 352 for his list! In fact, Richard had seen 354 species, but could not count Hooded Crow or Trumpeter Swan as they are species not accepted by NYSARC. The former could be an escape and the latter is not considered an established bird in New York State. In total he added eighty-three birds to his state list.

Richard lists the following equipment needed to do a big year: good optics, clothes for cold weather to at least five below zero. iPhone, GPS, reliable car, email, Internet, the stamina to get by on very little sleep, and a supportive spouse. I asked him if he was ready to try to set a new record in another year. He said firmly, "not in 2012 because I'm exhausted and I want to stay married." In 2012 he would like to see some of the New York species he missed in 2011, such as American Three-toed Woodpecker and Spruce Grouse and to concentrate on improving his auditory skills. He mentioned very much admiring Michael O'Brien for the latter. In spite of resolutions to relax and sleep late in 2012, he did check off the Grace's Warbler January 1, a good start for the New Year. Stay tuned.

As Richard talked during the interview, he credited a lot of people who helped him during the year. I emailed him about this to make sure I had all the names. He answered as follows: "I would have to say that it was Jacob Drucker who got me started birding with Lila and passed on some of his incredible

passion and drive for the pursuit, and Joe Giunta of NYC Audubon who helped me improve my skills and first put the idea of counting species in my head. I've also benefited greatly from the friendship, knowledge and skills of Deborah Allen and Bob DeCandido in New York City, Shai Mitra, Patricia Lindsay, Tom Burke and Gail Benson on Long Island, Angus Wilson and John Shemilt on pelagics, Willie D'Anna and Betsey Potter on the Niagara Frontier, John Haas in Sullivan and Orange Counties, Joan Collins in the Adirondacks and North Country, Jeff Bolsinger at Fort Drum, and especially young birders in the state club like Greg Lawrence and Benjamin Van Doren whose bird knowledge and birding skills are phenomenal and unmatched. The list of people who helped me is actually much longer. The truth is I met phenomenal birders everywhere I went in the state, and learned as much as I could from all of them. I could never have had the year that I did without their help."

[Photograph of Richard Fried by Stella Kim.]

~~~~~

## AVIAN HAVENS

Kate Kleber

Just over a year ago, on a beautiful mid-September day in Maine, while driving the back road from my home in Camden to the next town south, Rockland, I passed a soft-looking gray and white object lying in the middle of the road. Too big to be a mitten, too small to be a wool cap, and too warm a day to be either, with nothing coming in either direction, I decided to back up and investigate.

The object turned out to be a frightened bird, which became even more agitated as I approached it on foot. One wing was outstretched helplessly, and it was unable to

make more than a feeble attempt to move. There wasn't time for more than a quick look before dashing off to retrieve my light car blanket. Gray back, whitish breast, was that spot of white on the wing or the tail? Was it a mockingbird? But what about that slightly down-curved bill?

Hurrying back to the bird, I gently placed the blanket over it, carefully tucked the ends under it, and carried it to the trunk of my car. I formed a tent-like canopy over the creature, secured it, and then had to continue on my way to Rockland. As a result, it was an hour or more before I could try to find out where to take the bird for care.

At home, after making a few calls, I was able to reach a contact at Mid-Coast Audubon who suggested I get in touch with Avian Haven, a wild bird rehabilitation center in Freedom, Maine, about an hour's drive inland and northwest of Camden. Over the telephone, Diane Winn, one of the founders of the center, told me what to do: Line a cardboard box with a towel or sweatshirt, put the bird inside, cover the box, and place it in a warm, quiet place away from family traffic and pets; and if I could be at the Rockport Diner parking lot in about an hour, a volunteer who was picking up an injured bird in Rockland could stop on the way out to Freedom and pick up "my" bird, too.

Meanwhile, the bird must have nestled into the folds of the fabric, because at first when I held the blanket over the box, I had difficulty getting the bird to gently drop into the box without harming it further or risking the possibility of its escaping. But I needn't have worried, for when the body of the bird finally alighted on the soft cushion below, I saw with dismay that it did not move. Its eyes were half closed; its wings were tightly folded against its slim body; it showed no sign of life – until I moved the box slightly and one eye opened, and I saw barely perceptible movement. The bird had a chance.

At the appointed rendezvous, an excited but quiet little girl watched as her father placed another box in the back of their van. The birds were on their way to help.

A few days later, when I found myself just a half hour's drive away from Freedom, I decided to visit Avian Haven, to see if the injured bird had survived. But the center was not easy to find. There was no obvious sign along the tree-lined road. Unlike the New Jersey Raptor Center ([www.raptorcenter.org](http://www.raptorcenter.org)), the Avian Haven ([www.avianhaven.org](http://www.avianhaven.org)), as I later learned, cannot encourage visitors because the conditions of its permit forbid excess contact between the birds and humans. I must have driven past the center a couple of times, before finding a farmer down the road who provided a few landmarks which enabled me to find and turn into the center's wooded driveway. There was the center's sign, and up ahead in the trees were a number of low buildings. To one side, a few people stacked firewood, one of whom was Marc Payne, co-founder of the center, who approached me.

"I wondered how the mockingbird" – for want of a better identification – "is doing that was brought in a few days ago."

"Mockingbird? Oh, no. You must mean the Yellow-billed Cuckoo."

Yellow-billed Cuckoo! (Some of you reading this probably knew already from my earlier description what the bird was.)

Relieved to hear the bird was alive, I meekly followed Marc inside, past a small office space and infirmary, into a larger room lined with incubator-like cages. Stopping at the cuckoo's cage, Marc held the covering aside slightly and allowed just a brief look at the bird, so as to not stress it out further. Having only seen cuckoos from a distance in Central Park as they flitted in and out of the foliage, it was a privilege to see this elegant bird up close. It was its white eye ring that had helped to make it look so terrified in the middle of the road!

Afterwards, Marc gave me a short tour of the habitats and flight conditioning cages in the compound outside. Since incorporating in 1999, Avian Haven has treated nearly 12,000 birds, from hummingbirds to Bald Eagles. When asked what became of the birds that could not be rehabilitated, he replied that some birds, like the two wide-eyed Barred

Owls that looked out as us as we passed, became permanent residents; that the resident Bald Eagle was helpful in teaching other young, injured eagles how to retrieve food in their enclosure; and that homes were often found for others, with the Bronx Zoo on occasion accepting birds from them. Later, I read in the brochure that Avian Haven treats as many as a thousand birds annually from more than a hundred species.

Over the following weeks, I was able to follow the cuckoo's progress, at first by telephoning from time to time, and later by reading the Fourth Quarterly report about cases from 2010, found on the Haven's informative web site. Summarizing from the web site: the cuckoo was emaciated and underweight when it first arrived, but after a week of intensive care, it was eating on its own and had gained back enough of its normal weight that it could be placed in a medium-size indoor flight cage. X-rays had shown no broken bones, but damage to the left shoulder caused the bird to have limited extension of its left wing. On October 18<sup>th</sup>, in a test flight, the bird could not get off the ground, and although there was some improvement by October 25<sup>th</sup>, successful migration did not appear to be possible, so the decision was made to overwinter the bird.

Thus, the cuckoo came to share an indoor wintering habitat with a recovering Red-eyed Vireo. Referred to as "The Odd Couple" by the center's staff, volunteer Glori Berry took wonderful photographs (posted on their website) that depict the two birds, separately and together, in their habitat. Especially revealing is one taken of the cuckoo that shows the: ... "cinnamon color on the trailing edge of the primary flight feathers...most noticeable with the wings spread." By the middle of December, the cuckoo's injury appeared to have healed: ... "the bird could achieve the lift needed to fly up from the ground, and flight across the habitat area was flawless."

The Red-eyed Vireo did not survive until spring, but by the end of April, the cuckoo was able to be moved to an outside flight

conditioning cage. By now, according to Diane, the bird was vocalizing and was ready to go. So on a clear day in May, as its species was returning to Maine, the cuckoo was released. Diane said it flew up to the top of a nearby hemlock, paused for a moment, and then disappeared from view.

-----

Caring for a bird for several months, until, hopefully, it can be released, often requires that a facility be open 365 days a year. At Avian Haven, Diane and Marc supervise a full-time staff of volunteers. They also publish and conduct educational outreach programs on both the state and national level.

The romantic-sounding names of some wild bird rehabilitation centers, such as: Flyaway, Inc., in the Upper Hudson Valley of New York, or: On the Rush of Wings ([www.ontherushofwings.org](http://www.ontherushofwings.org)), in Friendship, Maine, can belie the solid knowledge that is behind their founding. Applicants for a license to operate a rehab center must satisfy stringent state and federal requirements. They are evaluated on, among other things, their experience, their plans for the center, their medical knowledge, and their sense of commitment, before permits will be issued.

Beth Settlemyer, who founded and planned the architectural details for On the Rush of Wings, said the center was "years in the making." Specializing in the seasonal care of marine and pelagic species, the center, which opened in July, 2011, has two salt water pools in the aviary, with seawater circulating in and out from the nearby ocean shore.

Suzie Gilbert, who established Flyaway, Inc. in 2002, planned originally to take in "only songbirds", but as time went on she was unable to turn away any injured bird, regardless of size. Eventually, as she relates in her book: *Flyaway* (2009, Harper Collins), her whole family became involved with her work. On occasion, she would hold a box of newly-orphaned nestlings on her lap and feed them while she watched her children's athletic games.

Vivienne Sokol, a long-time member of the Linnaean Society, has been caring for

birds whose injuries have been caused primarily by man-made structures, since 1978.

Wild bird rehabilitators, through their long-term dedication, can experience both pleasure and pain in their work – the pleasure that can be felt when a bird is restored to health, and the pain that can be felt when injuries make recovery for a bird impossible. Being able to heal a bird like the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, can bring rehabilitators a sense of reward as well as a sense of loss, when after months of care, a bird can be released, and it returns like a winged spirit to its natural environment.

~~~~~

**CLIVE MINTON –
2012 EISENMANN MEDALIST**

Helen Hays

Clive Minton, with his teams of banders, has probably banded more shorebirds than any other bander in the world. He has banded on all continents except Antarctica. He began banding on the Wash on England's east coast, a square-mouthed bay and estuary on the northwest margin of East Anglia where Norfolk meets Lincolnshire. Here he banded with the Wash Wader Ringing Group while earning his undergraduate degree in Natural Sciences and later a PhD in Metallurgy at Cambridge. In 1957 they used mist nets. Clive took a really big step for the group in 1959 when he borrowed rocket nets from Peter Scott at the Severn Wildfowl Trust. The group's catches went up from a few hundred in a year to several thousand in a week. When the propellant for the rocket nets was used up, Clive designed

and manufactured his own cannon net, a design he uses today and one that has been used in many countries around the world. Throughout his career Clive has been deeply involved in developing new bird catching methods from cage traps to hand operated clap nets, mist nets, rocket nets, and cannon nets. He has also been vitally interested and a participant in the evolution of marking devices to distinguish individual birds: color bands, engraved color bands, leg flags, and engraved leg flags. His interest in determining the routes birds take during migration and the time it takes them to reach their destinations has led him to work with radio telemetry, satellite telemetry, and more recently, geolocators. In the sixty-five years since he began banding birds in England long-term studies have been his principal interest. Both his Mute Swan and shorebird studies have been running for fifty years.

After receiving his PhD Clive started his first full time job in 1960 working for Imperial Metal Industries Ltd in England. He moved to Australia in 1978 to become managing director of IMI Australia in Melbourne. In Australia, Clive sparked new interest in shorebirds through netting. He expanded the shorebird studies of the Victoria Wader Study Group by introducing the members to cannon-netting and they became one of the most active bird banding groups in the world.



He organized and was founding chair of the Australian Wader Studies Group whose banding results at Roebuck Bay and nearby eighty mile beach focused world attention on the significance of these sites as places where hundreds of thousands of shorebirds stopped over in Australia each year. In 1988 the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union set up the Broome Bird Observatory close to these sites on the northwest coast of Australia in recognition of the importance of the area to migrating shorebirds, based on the records Clive and his groups had collected. Their banding information was instrumental in establishing the Asian Wetland Bureau in recognition of the importance of the East Asian Flyway through China to Siberia. His records, as well as those of the Victoria Wader Study Group, facilitated migratory bird agreements between Australia and Japan, Australia and China, and the formation of the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network.

Clive continues to lead the now internationally famous North-West Australia Wader & Tern Expedition annually. The numbers of cooperators comprising these expeditions vary in size. Perhaps the peak number participating occurred in 1998, when 117 people from seventeen countries took part. Since 1981 Clive and his group have trained an average of two people a year in cannon-netting. Over twenty countries have sent people to be trained, including: China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. People training for a cannon-netting license train for about three weeks. Once trained, he encourages them to put a maximum catch limit of one hundred birds, which is what they give most banders in Australia who first qualify for a netting license. There are about fifteen licensed cannon-netters in Australia.

Clive retired at fifty-eight to give himself additional time for field work as well as to write up more of the projects he has finished. In 1995 he and his team netted in Argentinean Tierra del Fuego. In 1997 he and his group

netted at three other locations in Argentina and two in Brazil. Each May since 1997 he has joined an American team and netted two to four thousand shorebirds at Delaware Bay. His team size depends on the level of experience, the size of the net used and the size of the catch expected. Typically they have ten to fifteen people, often over twenty, but he has netted with as little as two when a small net and limited catch is anticipated. The maximum team – ever – included eighty people and occurred once at Delaware Bay!

Clive Minton's career in many ways parallels that of Eugene Eisenmann, making Clive an extremely appropriate recipient of the Eisenmann Medal. Both men retired early in their careers to work on birds. Both men were generous with their time in helping amateurs and both men published their bird studies in scientific journals.

Clive's talk, "*A Lifetime of Bird Banding on Five Continents*", at the Linnaean Society Annual Meeting on March 13, promises to be entertaining and informative. Don't miss it!

Awards and honours

1975 – Bernard Tucker Medal for services to ornithology

1998 – Fellow of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists Union (RAOU)

2000 – RAOU's John Hobbs Medal for "outstanding contributions to ornithology as an amateur"

2001 – Member of the Order of Australia for "services to ornithology, particularly in the study of migratory wading birds in Australia"

2003 – Australian Natural History Medallion

[Photograph of Clive Minton holding a juvenile Banded Stilt by Roger and Daniel Minton.]



1912 LINNAEAN "SMOKER"

~~~~~

The following invitation to a December 1912 Linnaean Society "dinner and smoker" was recently found by Helen Hays in the Society's archives. Note the guest of honor was Frank M. Chapman and the invitation was sent out by Society secretary, Ludlow Griscom. The cost was \$1.00!

## LINNAEAN NEWS-LETTER

Editor: Joseph DiCostanzo  
Linnaean News-Letter  
15 West 77th Street  
New York, NY 10024  
newsletter@linnaeannewyork.org  
Manuscript acquisition: Helen Hays  
Production and mailing: Thomas Endrey

JONATHAN DWIGHT, Jr., President

CLINTON G. ABBOTT, Vice-President

LEWIS B. WOODRUFF, Treasurer

## The Linnaean Society of New York

Founded 1878

American Museum of Natural History  
77th Street and Central Park West

LUDLOW GRISCOM,  
~~FRANCIS HARPER~~ Secretary  
21 ~~700~~ Washington Square  
New York City

New York, December 4, 1913.

Dear Sir:

You are cordially invited to attend the first annual dinner and smoker of the Linnaean Society of New York which is to be held on December 17th, 7 P.M. at The Hotel Endicott, Columbus Avenue and 81st Street, New York City. Mr. Frank M. Chapman will be the Society's guest of honour, in recognition of his distinguished services in the field of Natural History, and particularly through his work in popularizing the study of birds.

In addition, there will be an interesting programme of speeches from the Society's members and invited guests.

The cost of the dinner will be \$1.00 per cover. It will be open to members of the Linnaean Society and also to their friends.

Your hearty co-operation is solicited in making this event of the Society in the cause of Science a great success.

Please send cheque by return mail to Mr. L. B. Woodruff, 24 Broad Street, in payment for the number of seats which you may wish.

W. W. Grant, Chairman, )  
140 Nassau St., New York. )  
L. B. Woodruff ) Dinner  
R. C. Andrews ) Committee  
John T. Nichols )

P.S. Dress informal.