



## Trail Work Proceeds

by Elaine Koral

As you may have already heard, the Foundation's bid for I.S.T.E.A. funds to develop the Lehigh Valley Trail has been unsuccessful. "Had our application received approval, we would have been able to complete a real nice trail in short order," said Dick Dehm, Head of the Trail Development project for the Mendon Foundation. "We went for the home run and we struck out but we certainly haven't given up on the trail." A new strategy has been developed, namely: tackle the job in smaller pieces and move at a slower pace.

Volunteers are working on the myriad of details generated by this project. Three groups, The Mendon Foundation, Victor Hiking Trails and Rush trail volunteers are working together to produce trail signs and trail safety rules so that they are uniform throughout the entire length of the trail.

Dehm states that certain goals have been set and it is hoped they can be accomplished by early in the Summer of 1997. They include continued cleaning, clearing and filling of low areas of the trail. Also included is the decking of three bridges between East River Road and Mile Square Road. "Just by doing this one job, we could make the trail negotiable to hikers the entire distance", states Dehm. (As this article goes to press we can report that the decking of the bridge located in Rush was completed by Rush trail volunteers on October 26.) Also, safety and access signs will be installed at road intersections on a priority basis. Improvements to the parking lot on the south side of Route 251 will be made in cooperation with the Little League. Eastman Kodak has donated cinder material and it is planned to create two test sites on the trail to see if the cinders would make an effective surface for the trail. "We want to see whether hikers, bikers and horseback riders would be satisfied with the results," says Dehm.

In order to accomplish these goals the Foundation is looking for cash and equipment donations. Dehm states, "Of utmost importance is the decking of the bridges. We need \$6,000 to cover the cost of materials for the two bridges in Mendon plus labor to install the

decking." Another very important item needed is the use of a small bulldozer. It is an essential piece of equipment for leveling areas of the trail in preparation for spreading the cinders. In order to transport the cinders to the trail test sites the Foundation also needs the use of a large truck; a "10 wheeler" would be great. Also wanted are interested individuals or groups to donate funds for the creation of trail signs. Anyone interested in donating cash or in providing or operating equipment should call Dick Dehm at 624-4466. \* \* \*

### • Mendon Foundation • Mission Statement

The Mendon Foundation is a non-profit corporation established to:

**PRESERVE**, protect and enhance the scenic, natural, recreational and structural resources in the Town of Mendon and directly adjacent properties,

**MAINTAIN** a responsible stewardship of assets and properties held or controlled by the corporation,

**ESTABLISH** and promote local environmental education on issues pertinent to the preservation of natural resources in the Town of Mendon,

**ESTABLISH** and promote programs to monitor the natural resources in the Town of Mendon.

As we succeed in these objectives, we enhance property values for all Mendon property owners. The Foundation is supported by membership fees, grants and other contributions. Donations to the Mendon Foundation are tax deductible.

Proceeds are used to cover easement acquisitions, monitoring and communications.  
All labor is volunteer.

# Mendon's International Bird Feeders

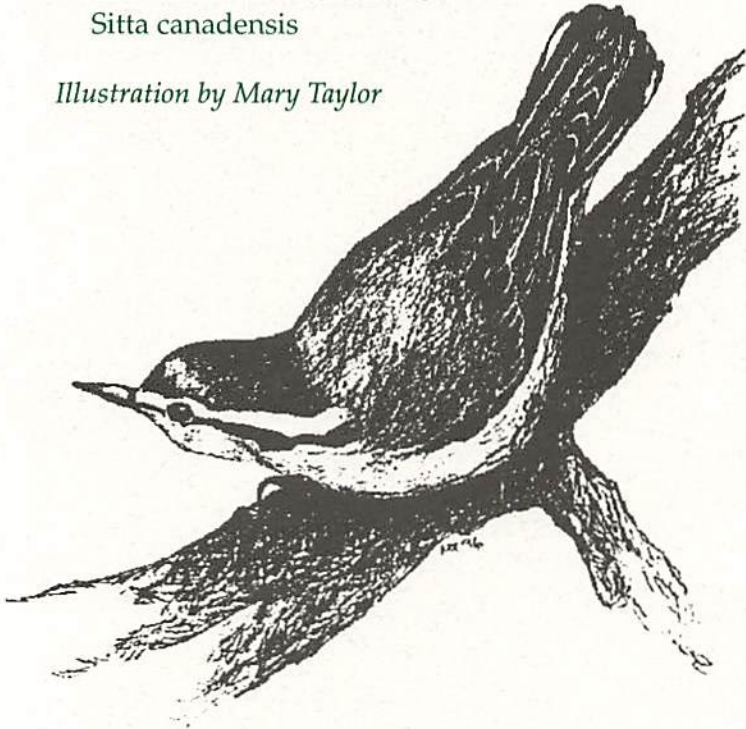
by Sarah Talpey

**WANTED:** Country location with well-stocked bird feeder. Willing to travel. Birds that spend the winter in Mendon may have points of origin from around the globe; the far west, the deep south, Canada, Europe, China, or Africa. Some were brought here long ago by people who wanted to relocate them for reasons that seemed good at the time. Then Nature took charge, and the birds increased in numbers beyond all belief.

One such overseas immigrant is the ubiquitous English sparrow, which is neither English nor a sparrow but a weaver finch from Europe, Asia, North Africa and the British Isles. In 1850 the directors of the Brooklyn Institute imported eight pairs of these little birds, properly called house sparrows, on the assumption that they would eat weed seeds and insect pests in New York City. After only 20 years and a few more import efforts, the super-adaptable sparrows had established a firm foothold in 20 states.

## RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH *Sitta canadensis*

*Illustration by Mary Taylor*



At first they were encouraged to spread. "People protected them, fed, housed and coddled them," one turn of the century nature writer explained. "Meanwhile the birds which needed nobody's care, being fit to survive if ever a creature was, multiplied enormously." Another commentary was more terse: "It certainly is not because they are meek that they are inheriting the earth."

In their progress westward, it's said that they followed the horse — not for company, but to pick up undigested grain from manure. By the time cars and machinery replaced horses, the omnivorous birds had discovered plenty of other food sources, had covered the North American continent and were just as gregarious and successful here as they were in the Old World. They are absent in wilderness areas but ever present with people. . . and near bird feeders. If we were not so inundated with house sparrows, the good looks of the male — rich chestnut markings on the back and head and a neat black bib under the chin — might excite some admiration.

It's the same story with another unpopular import from across the Atlantic, the European starling, which is usually dismissed as plain and dark, not worth a second glance. But not so! In winter plumage, its glossy black feathers are dotted with light buffy tips. A birding newcomer, unfamiliar with this striking appearance, may run for the bird book only to find that the exotic discovery is all too common.

The starling's success story repeats the house sparrow's, but begins about 50 years later. A few of these common European birds were released in New York City and by 1902 three pairs had taken up residence on a fire escape in Union Square. With human encouragement they built nests, raised their young and, like the sparrows before them, spread out across the continent, eventually entering the nuisance category.

To make matters worse, this newcomer preferred holes in trees and other cavities for nest sites, and it was soon in direct competition with native species like the bluebird. Where there's one starling, others aren't far behind. They travel together in noisy groups, loudly announcing their arrival at feeders.

One favorable note: starlings devour great quantities of grubs on lawns. And their voice, if you listen to a single bird, far outshines the insistent chirping of the house sparrow. It gives away its close relationship to the Mynah bird by skillfully imitating the calls of many other species.

(cont'd on page 6)

## You Make the Difference

Many of us share a dream of helping a non-profit group we feel strongly about. For those of you concerned about protecting and preserving Mendon's natural, scenic, recreational and structural resources, we encourage you to consider The Mendon Foundation when you are preparing to make that charitable donation. With the recent denial of our application for an I.S.T.E.A. grant, the generosity of our supporters is more important than ever.

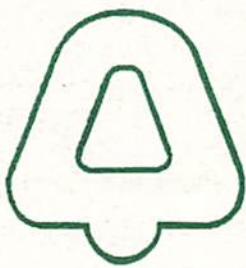
An outright donation of goods, services, cash, easements or land is always appreciated. You can also make a significant donation by using life insurance policies or by creating a trust. All of these forms of gifting have built in tax savings for you.

Robert Dunton has recently accepted the role as Head of our Committee for Charitable Giving. Also on the committee are Julia Garver, Jim Zielinski and Marge Garay. This committee includes experts in the fields of insurance, law and accounting. If you have any questions about how to make a donation, give Robert Dunton

a call at 248-6739. He or one of the committee members will be able to help answer your questions.

When you make a large contribution your funds will be used (in part) for the purchase and stewardship of land and the acquisition of land easements. By these means we plan to create wildlife corridors within the Town of Mendon. We also plan to move ahead with the development of the Lehigh Valley Linear Trail. Our short term goals include raising enough cash and getting materials to refurbish trail bridges and to create signs to be posted along the path. You can make a difference by making a cash pledge or by donating materials. Call Robert Dunton if you would like to contribute to any of these projects.

Your gift whether large or small really does make a difference in helping us to continue our various projects. Our projects, in turn, contribute to the high quality of life we have in Mendon. Also, they indirectly help to maintain property values and increase revenue to our local businesses. When you make a gift to the Foundation you will get the profound sense of satisfaction that comes from supporting a community foundation. \* \* \*



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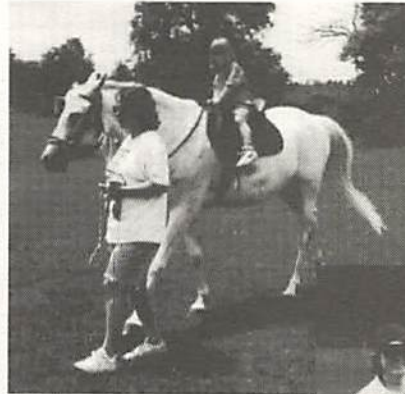
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# Snaps from Our Fundraiser

Here are but a few pictures from our Trail Day '96 fund raiser. We had horses to ride, games to play, food to eat, fortunes to tell, raffle drawings and many other activities. All participants were invited to stop by the Foundation's booth to buy a shirt or hat and of course, become a member!



## WEAR YOUR SUPPORT!

Our Mendon Foundation logo is proudly displayed on our hats (white cap with dark green brim), golf shirts and sweatshirts. And yes, we still have some commemorative "Trail Day" T-shirts. Get one of our commemorative T's before they're all gone. All shirts have a dark green background and white lettering and come in three different sizes. Prices quoted include sales tax.

	<b>TOTAL</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> I would like _____ hats at \$10.75 each. (one size fits all) <small>(indicate how many)</small>	_____
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Please include a check with your order form and mail to: The Mendon Foundation, P.O. Box 231, Mendon, New York 14506-0231	

Late Fall 1996

## New Members and Renewals

The people and businesses listed below have supported us by becoming new members or by renewing their current memberships since our last issue went to press. The list also includes people who have made special cash donations.

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We would like to add your name to our list of supporters. If you would like to join or renew or make an additional cash contribution, please complete the membership form on page 8 and mail it in. Remember, your donation is tax deductible!

### Special Thanks to:

Larry Hilderbrant for donating your time and expertise assessing our copier donations and nursing them back to health when necessary;

Foundry Associates for your donation of a laptop computer;

Narang's for your donation of a copier and toner; and

Mary Taylor for your original illustrations displayed in this issue and our Spring 1996 newsletter.



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## Mendon's Int'l Bird Feeders (Cont'd)

Lately there's a new bird that's moved here to stay. It's the house finch, a bird native only to the far western United States until 1940, when a few caged birds were somehow released on Long Island. Small pockets soon appeared in new locations and an honest-to-goodness population explosion spread through the Northeast. It's now a familiar bird at the feeder, recognized by its red splotchy color and its cheerful song. (Don't confuse it with the raspberry colored, native purple finch.)

Human intervention is not the only way that new bird species arrive, of course. Some migrate season to season on age-old flyways, while other non-migratory species may spread into a larger range on a permanent basis.

Successful small birds that fly in from Canada to relocate near our winter feeders are legion. Without fanfare they cross the border, migrating south as far as necessary to fulfill their feeding needs, and remain here only until spring. One of these dependable feeder customers is the dark eyed junco. It prefers to feed by scratching on the ground for seeds and its slate-gray and white plumage blends quietly with winter's colors so that it can feed almost unnoticed. John Burroughs called the juncos "snowbirds".

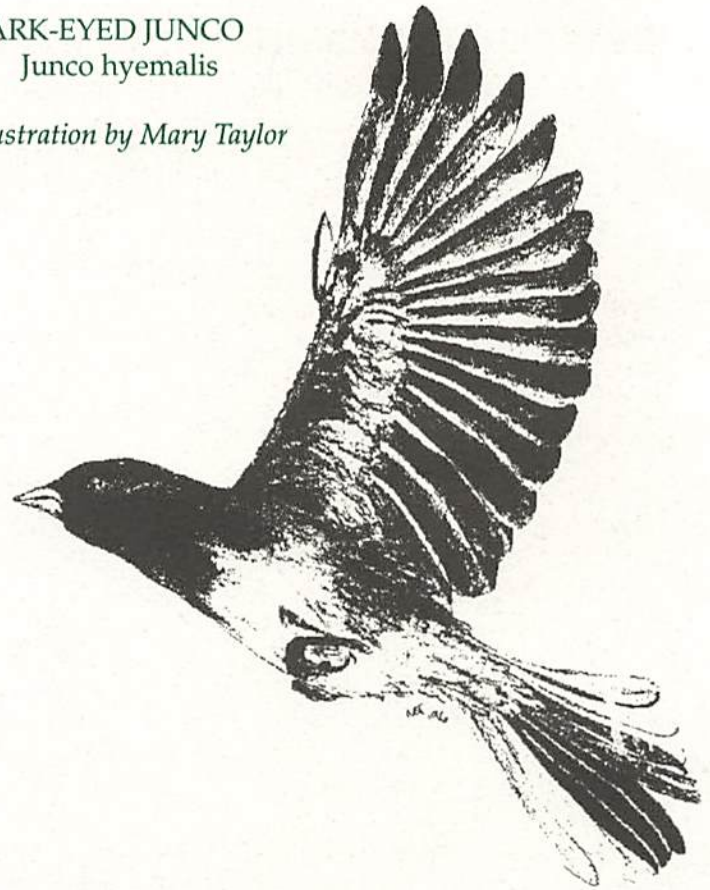
Less dependable are the so-called northern finches, here one winter and absent the next. Their irregular southward movements, called incursions, are unpredictable and are tied into food availability on their home territory. The smallest of the finches, pine siskins and common redpolls, literally line up for feeder spots in the good years.

Meanwhile, some species are spreading northward from the southern U.S. to take up year-round residence here. They may be responding in part to warming trends or to the increased presence of feeders. One example is the tufted titmouse, a sprightly cousin of the familiar black-capped chickadee. An early 1900's bird book says, "Do not expect to meet the titmouse if you live very far north of Washington, D.C.". The newest Peterson guide lists its range in the eastern United States as "from the Gulf of Mexico to the southern edge of Ontario, Canada," indicating a major change which has occurred mainly in the last 25 years.

The best known "southern bird" found at almost everybody's feeder, is the one we may take for granted, as if it has always been here: the cardinal. The saga of its arrival was closely observed by the late Joe Taylor of Mendon, a lifelong birder who was recognized nation-

## DARK-EYED JUNCO *Junco hyemalis*

*Illustration by Mary Taylor*



ally and internationally for his travels and "lifest" of birds seen. In a conversation with this writer in 1990, he remembered a winter day in 1924 when he and a friend were making a Christmas census of birds in Highland Park. "We saw this red bird... and we just stared. We couldn't believe it. We were just boys."

No wonder they were amazed: the event was the first recorded sighting of the cardinal in Rochester. Then, 15 years and a few cardinals later, Taylor had a phone call asking the identity of "an odd red bird with a crest and a black face that is building a nest." Taylor said, "You can't be right, but I'll be right over." This proved to be the first Rochester record of nesting cardinals near Ellison Park. Taylor continued to keep track of nesting pairs throughout the country until he found that they were everywhere, summer and winter.

In addition to these comparative newcomers descending on your backyard feeders, you can expect bluejays, nuthatches, chickadees, goldfinches and woodpeckers too. With this number and variety of species, it's no wonder that winter bird feeding is so popular, or that it's had an impact on species population and distribution.

Here are some reminders for the keepers of the feeders. If you start feeding the birds in winter, don't stop until spring when their natural food is again available. Birds remember your feeder as they make their rounds, and they will rely on it. Fill the feeders late in the day so there's plenty to eat first thing in the morning and provide ample food before and during storms. Just as important, regularly clean all feeders and sweep the ground beneath them to prevent seed from accumulating and being contaminated by bird droppings or by mold.

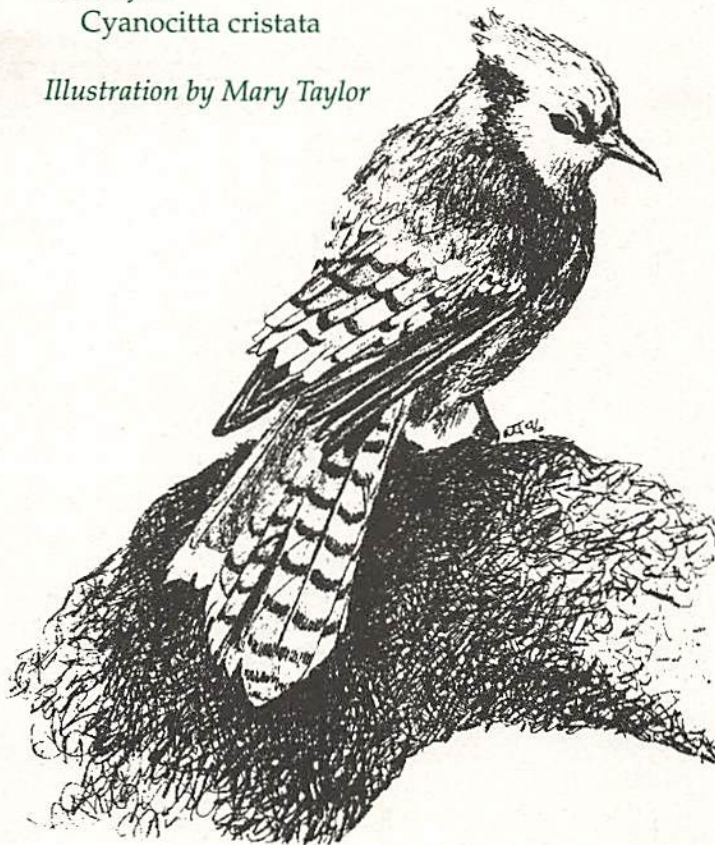
Activity at a busy feeder will attract predators but you can place your feeder near shrubs, trees or thickets to allow the birds a speedy retreat to cover. Wintering Cooper's hawks, sharp-shinned hawks and maybe even a shrike will occasionally take a bird from a backyard feeder: it's a dramatic but natural ecological event. Predators that are the well-fed companions of humans are another matter: Cats should be confined indoors to ensure the safety of the birds you have invited.

With an endless assortment of bird feeders for sale, we sometimes overlook the obvious, such as pieces of suet wedged under loose tree bark or a sprinkling of seed on the ground. Or even seed on your extended hand. Try this on the Bird Song Trail in Mendon Ponds Park and you'll know it works. Make sure you have a pocket full of sunflower seeds because the chickadees there will be expecting this bird-in-the-hand feeding method.

Still grumbling about winter in Rochester? Our winter birds have traveled from near and far to be here! Leaves are off the trees so it's easy to see them; the neutral colors of gray and brown and white provide a perfect background; your feeders will bring them close for observation; and every morning you'll have an international backyard bird population to observe. Take advantage of this seasonal opportunity, and winter may turn out to be all too short. \*\*\*

BLUE JAY  
Cyanocitta cristata

Illustration by Mary Taylor



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