

# FYKE NATURE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

www.fykenature.org

Vol. 59 – No. 4 – Winter 2013



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **November 22, 2013 - Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Members Night.**

Please come and enjoy an evening of short presentations by Fyke Members or better yet, be a presenter and share your own photos, prints, collections, stories, etc. For digital presentations, please contact Kurt Muenz at 201-447-0107 or [elkumu@aceweb.com](mailto:elkumu@aceweb.com).

**December 14, 2013 - Christmas Bird Count.** An all day activity with a recap meeting open to all at the Allendale Municipal Building at 5:30 p.m. Please see the article on page two.

### **January 24, 2014 - Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Owls of New Jersey - Don Torino.**

Don Torino, President of Bergen County Audubon Society, will present a program on Owls of New Jersey. More than any other group of birds, nature lovers are in awe of Owls. They are mysterious creatures of the night and are steeped in folklore and mythology. Don will discuss the many owl species that can be seen in our area.

**February 8, 2014 - Field Trip: The Teatown Hudson River Eaglefest at Croton Point Park in Croton-on-Hudson, NY.** The hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Live bird shows, eagle viewing and tons of activities for all! Meet onsite. (Snow date February 9.)



*To watch the flight of shore birds that have swept up and down the surf lines of the continents for untold thousands of years . . . is to have knowledge of things that are as nearly eternal as any earthly life can be.*

*---Rachel Carson*

**Ramsey Christmas Bird Count - 2013**  
By John Brotherton



Planning has started for our 62nd annual Christmas Bird Count to be held Saturday December 14, 2013. The count is part of the 114th Christmas Bird Count, a continent-wide program organized by the National Audubon Society. Last season our count was one of over 1,800 circles covered by 50,000 field observers who listed over 60 million birds in the US. Our group of 38 counted 17,528 birds of 99 species. As usual the leading counts in the US were in Texas and California where the top four counts had 215 to 244 species.

In New Jersey the leader among 30 counts was Cape May with 169 species. We can't expect to challenge that number, but we will be on the lookout for Cackling Goose (recently split from Canada Goose), Eurasian Wigeon, Eared Grebe, Wild Turkey, Spotted Towhee and Brown-headed Cowbird. We also hope for Ruffed Grouse and Northern Shrike, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak.

As most of you know we cover a 15 mile diameter circle centered on Lake Erskine, including all or part of Ramsey, Mahwah, Allendale, Wyckoff, Franklin Lakes, Oakland, Wayne, Pompton Lakes, Bloomingdale, Ringwood, West Milford, Greenwood Lake, Tuxedo, Hillburn, Sloatsburg and Suffern.

We will send at least eight teams to different sections of the area to count birds from dawn to dusk. Some teams will search for owls before and after daylight. The co-compilers are John Brotherton and Stiles Thomas. If you would like to join one of the teams call Stiles at 201-327-3470. For any other questions, call John at 201-327-1483 or jbro29@optonline.net.



The recap meeting, to which all are invited, will be held starting at 5:30 p.m. the day of the count at the Allendale Municipal Building Council Chambers, 500 West Crescent Avenue, Allendale, NJ, second floor.

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**Field and Feeder Notes**  
By Judith Cinquina

*Albinism is of relatively common occurrence in the catbird; many both pure and partial albinistic forms have been reported...Mrs. F. L. Battell (1941) writes of seeing two albino catbirds that appeared with the parent catbirds at Ames, Iowa, during the summer of 1940. Although nearly full grown they were still fed by the adults. The young were pure white, even the feathers of the crissum being without a trace of color.*

*From: Bent's Life Histories (1948), 1964 Dover Edition*

A pure white Gray Catbird appeared at the Celery Farm in early September. First reported by Fred Weber, it was viewed and photographed by a number of Fyke members, and gained notoriety on Jim Wright's Celery Farm Blog (Just Google albino Catbird and see what turns up!). C. Chandler Ross researched albinism and reported his findings in an edition of CassiniaOnline. The author found 255 species of the 670 A.O.U. Checklist species (at the time of the research), showing albinism and 63 species, including our Gray Catbird, showing total albinism. According to John K. Terris, in his

Encyclopedia of N. American Birds, albinism is more common in dark birds, especially blackbirds, crows, hawks, and robins. The reason for this is that albinos are unable to produce melanin, a brownish-black pigment. On September 26, Mike Limatola posted a close-up photo of the albino catbird on our Yahoo site. The photo showed its all-white plumage, pale legs and bill, and, most important, its red eye. True albinos have red eyes because, without melanin, the underlying blood vessels in an albino's eyes show through. Conspicuous by their whiteness, albinos often don't last long. If they're not targeted by predators or harassed by their own kind, Terres states, they often have weak eyesight and brittle wing and tail feathers, a toxic combination for survival.



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Wilson's Phalaropes are rare migrants anytime in our area. Most migrate through the Great Plains, so one that materialized in the shorebird pool at DeKorte Park, Lyndhurst September 11, was a treat. Found by my beginner birding class and photographed by Jim Wright, the phalarope remained for at least one more day and was enjoyed by a number of Fyke members and friends. Although heavy haze prevented Jim from capturing a sharp snapshot, his photo did reveal the shorebird's long, needle-like bill and its overall longish rump area and eliminated Red-necked Phalarope, which have a shorter, thicker bill and smaller back end. For a good part of the time, the phalarope stayed between or near hunting Lesser Yellowlegs who may have been stirring up prey with their long legs. The phalarope was tiny next to the larger yellowlegs and moved quickly back and forth in a limited area, pecking at the water surface. Rob Fanning viewed it on the 12th in the same pool, in much better light and noted it was a molting adult male. Wilson's Phalaropes nest in shallow grassy wetlands on our prairies and around the Great Lakes. The females, the pretty ones, begin their journey south in mid-summer, but males, who are responsible for bringing up the chicks, migrate in late summer through early fall. The species winters on the other side of the equator in Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Argentina.

Near DeKorte, at the Clay Ave. wetlands, an Avocet turned up October 16. Not that unusual in Cape May or at Brigantine this time of year, it is a very rare sighting this far north in NJ. Rosemarie Widmer found it still there the next afternoon and watched it feeding and bathing. According to Rosemarie, it was an adult male with a slightly up-turned, needle-like bill and with no rufous on its nape. A female's bill would have been longer and more strongly up-turned. Alexander Wilson found breeding Avocets in the marshes of Cape May County in 1810 (Bird Studies of Old Cape May, 1937, Witmer Stone, 1965 Dover Publication). "They flew around the shallow pools...fluttering their loose wings, and shaking their half bent legs, as if ready to tumble over, and keeping a continual yelping note." It is further related by Stone that Audubon visited Great Egg Harbor in May 1829, and saw "but three Avocets and found no nests." No Avocet nests have been found since.

A Long-billed Dowitcher, another uncommon shorebird in this part of NJ, hunted mudflats with two Lesser Yellowlegs at Mahwah Green Acres, October 17, Simon Streatfeild reported. He wrote that the dowitcher was very gray, hump-backed, and was probing the mud with its very long bill. Unlike Short-billed Dowitchers, Long-bills migrate later in the fall, molt into their gray winter plumage prior to migration and prefer fresh water to a brackish habitat. Simon also counted 71 Wood Ducks, two Ruddy Ducks, and 15 White-throated Sparrows among the 32 species he recorded that morning. Fred Weber discovered the earliest White-throated Sparrow reported this season on September 18 at State Line Lookout. It was keeping company with a Lincoln's Sparrow. A Savannah Sparrow perched atop a spruce in Betty McDonnell's Mahwah yard, September 25. She described it as tiny, with a forked tail, some pale yellow in the face and with short, reddish stripes on its upper chest. Thirteen other Savannahs fed on the lawn around the now-drained Crestwood Lake in Allendale, October 11. Jim Wright reported the first and only Fox Sparrow, October 19 at the Celery Farm (CF).

Shy, secretive (and still on my mythical list) Connecticut Warblers presented themselves to their annual believers again this fall. Rob spotted the first one at the CF, September 20 near No Name Culvert. It flew across the trail in front of him, popped up once, and vanished into a cattail maze. And, of course, four days later, John Workman had to top that by finding two more at Halifax. John wrote: "Well, after a while I decided I'd just stop actively searching and simply enjoy the remaining minutes I was outside in the fall air. That's when the first one wobbled a frond of mugwort, and then popped up. A couple of minutes later, a second joined it. Pure luck. A case of right place, right time." (But you have to believe!) John described them as young birds with a hint of a gray hood.



We have had a very dry fall, and I'm happy to see reports of folks attracting birds to their birdbaths. Birds depend on clean water to not only drink but to keep their plumage clean and healthy. Enid Hayflick enjoyed a male Black-throated Blue Warbler in her Ridgewood birdbath on September 15. The next day her bath attracted a male and female Redstart, a Black and White Warbler and an immature Magnolia. On October 11, she observed a Hermit Thrush "doing morning ablutions in the birdbath" and an E. Towhee nearby. Two days later, Rosemarie Widmer found a Blackpoll Warbler in her birdbath and a Hermit Thrush in her Allendale yard. October 5 brought two new species into my Upper Saddle River birdbath; an E. Phoebe and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were on the move in early October in our area. A brown immature was at the Overpeck Park Stables area, October 2. Two more were in my yard, that same day and must have stuck around. Three days later I discovered the pair fighting over sap wells on a Black Birch bole. Both were males, although one retained brownish edges to its feathers, indicating it was a first year bird. On the 8th Rob found one at the CF, and on the 13th, two more were at Skylands Manor in Ringwood. Young and female Yellow-bellieds usually winter south of us, while the males tend to stay closer to their breeding grounds, if weather and food availability permit.

Most Ruby-throated Hummingbirds have migrated through our area by mid-September, but not all. On September 26, just after she had taken down her feeder, Betty McDonnell had a Ruby-throat "all over" her patio flowerpots. Mike Gallo, also in Mahwah, stated he was surprised how tame they were, hovering two feet in front of his face to feed at his feeder. Rob discovered one very late hummer at the CF, October 8.

Proving you don't have to be at a hawk watch to enjoy a variety of migrant raptors, the Hour on the Tower crew spotted a nice variety. On September 15th, they bagged a Red-shoulder, Cooper's and an Am. Kestrel; on the 23rd, they scored a Peregrine Falcon, and on the 28th, a Merlin. Thanks goes to Darlene Lembo and Charlie West for keeping the Tower Hour going. And a Red-tailed Hawk perched near the Swift roost chimney on the steeple of the Washington Ave. School in Ridgewood, September 9. According to Carol Flanagan, it left before the Swifts showed up. She also noted a C. Nighthawk over the roost site.

Many of you may not realize how new N. Cardinals are to our area. In 1908, Witmer Stone reported them absent from northern NJ. We now take them for granted. In fact, they may be able to breed into late summer now. Carol noted a pair feeding young on September 14 in her Hawthorne yard, and I noted independent but very young Cardinals at the CF in late September. Cardinals are often parasitized by Brown-headed Cowbirds, but Cowbirds are busy rounding up their foster children later in the summer, and are no longer laying eggs, so Cardinals may benefit if weather and food permit later broods.

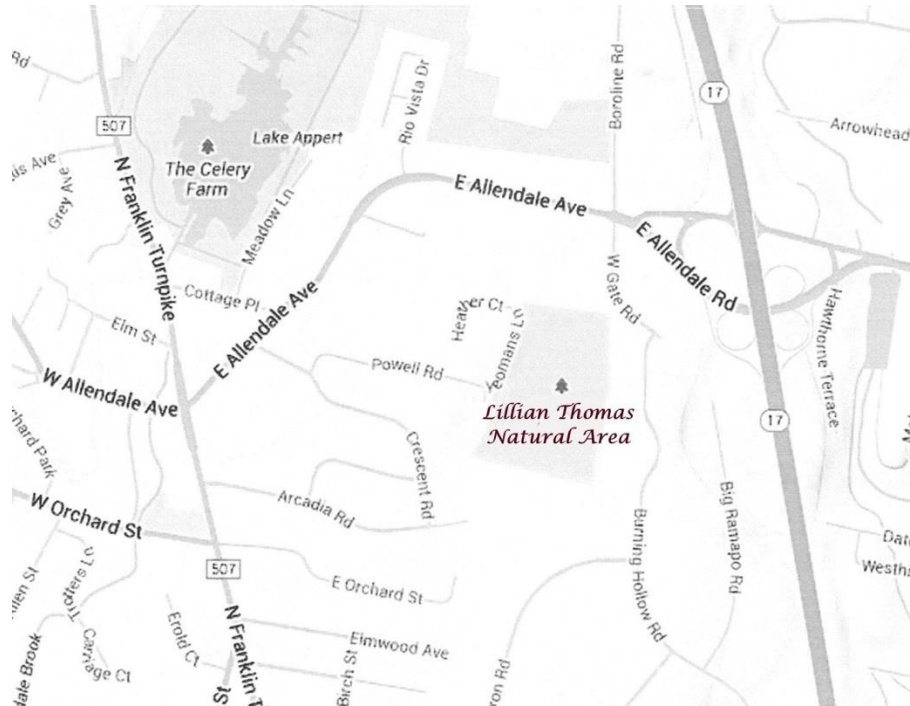
Enjoy your backyard birds and keep your feeders clean. Post your sightings on our Yahoo site or send your observations to me at [judycinq@optonline.net](mailto:judycinq@optonline.net) or call me at (201) 327-1782. For information on the latest bird sightings, go to [www.fykenature.org](http://www.fykenature.org) and sign up with our discussion group where many of the reports for this column originated.

## The Lillian Thomas Natural Area

At the Fyke Nature Association meeting Friday, Allendale Mayor Vince Barra read a proclamation that a 20-acre parcel previously known as the Allendale Wetlands (located off Powell Road) would henceforth be known as the Lillian Thomas Natural Area.

The name change was in recognition of all Lillian did to stop these environmentally sensitive wetlands from being developed, as well as her many other contributions to Allendale and beyond. The wetlands, now owned by the Passaic River Coalition, will remain open space for perpetuity.

## Thank you Lillian!!!!



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## Two Urgent Conservation Issues

### 1) Protect the Palisades

LG Electronics is seeking to build a 143-foot headquarters in an area previously zoned for a maximum building height of 35 feet. The height restriction was waived in early 2012 through a variance, which has been challenged in court. The Palisades are included in the National Natural Landmarks Program administered by National Parks Service and are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Protect the Palisades is a coalition of individuals and organizations dedicated to preserving the Hudson River Palisades. For more information on the Palisades – and how you can help – visit the Protect the Palisades website at [www.protectthepalisades.org](http://www.protectthepalisades.org). Click on the “Write to LG” button on the home page to automatically send an email to Wayne Park, CEO and President of LG Electronics of North America. Also see their Facebook page, [Protect the Palisades](#).

## 2) The Ridgefield Park Eagles Nest

Bald Eagles have been nesting in Ridgefield Park in a tree on a polluted landfill on the site of an old industrial site along Overpeck Creek. The eagles have successfully fledged six young over the three years.



Soil on the site is contaminated with metals and PCBs, which the state Department of Environmental Protection says must be capped before development can proceed. Installing a cap, a layer of clean fill, involves cutting down vegetation — including the tree claimed by the eagles.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommends that any development near an eagle's nest should maintain a buffer of 660 feet so as not to disturb the birds. The proposal by Ridgefield Park's Environmental Commission would create a buffer of about 200 feet.

Watch for updates in the local press and on the Fyke Yahoo e-mail list. Also see their Facebook page, [Friends of the Ridgefield Park Eagles](#).

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## Hour on the Tower / Stiles Thomas Labor Day Challenge 9/08/13

Darlene Lembo reports that the tower was crowded as many people came out for the HOT challenge to Stiles Thomas and his team in Massachusetts. We had 13 observers; this may be the record for the number of people at the HOT. The final count was 30 for the HOT team and 24 for Stiles' team.

### Congratulations to Celery Farm HOT team!!!

The HOT list:

American Crow  
American Goldfinch  
American Kestrel  
American Robin  
Belted Kingfisher  
Black Duck  
Blue Jay  
Canada Goose  
Carolina Wren  
Cedar Waxwing  
Chimney Swift

Common Grackle  
Downy Woodpecker  
European Starling  
Gray Catbird  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Green Heron  
Green-winged Teal  
(unconfirmed)  
House Sparrow  
Mallard

Mourning Dove  
Northern Cardinal  
Northern Flicker  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Tree Swallow  
Turkey Vulture  
Warbling Vireo  
Wood Duck

The Thomas List:

American Goldfinch  
Belted Kingfisher  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Blue Jay  
Carolina Wren  
Chimney Swift  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Downy Woodpecker

European Starling  
Gray Catbird  
Great Blue Heron  
Gull sp.  
House Sparrow  
House Wren  
Mallard  
Mourning Dove

Osprey  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Song Sparrow  
Tree Swallow  
Turkey Vulture  
Wild Turkey

## The Big Sit! October 13, 2013

By Carol Flanagan

Thanks to all team members of our team, the Celery Stalkers, who participated in this year's Big Sit! The Big Sit! is an event started by the New Haven Bird Club and now sponsored by Birdwatchers Digest. The rules are simple: you designate a circle 17 feet in diameter and sit inside the circle for 24 hours, and count all the bird species you see or hear. Our circle is centered at the Pirie Platform at the Celery Farm. This was the 19th year we competed in The Big Sit!



Our total this year was 50 species. This year two new species were seen, Common Raven and Spotted Sandpiper. They bring our cumulative total to 121 species!



An interesting sighting was a B-17C that flew low over Lake Appert just after 2 p.m. This was nicknamed the Silver-winged Gas Guzzler by John Brotherton and Kurt Muenz.

### Participants:

Stiles Thomas – Co-Captain  
Carol Flanagan – Co-Captain  
Barbara Besold  
John Bird  
John Brotherton  
Sara Buckley  
Barbara Dilger

Nancy Drabik  
Bill Drummond  
Gail Kelly  
Darlene Lembo  
Mike Limatola  
Julie Mc Call  
Doug Morel

Kurt Muenz  
Jim O'Leary  
Diane Rigg  
Gabriele Schmitt  
Simon Streatfeild  
Michael Tat

### Species list:

Double-crested Cormorant  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Turkey Vulture  
Black Vulture  
Canada Goose  
Wood Duck  
American Wigeon  
American Black Duck  
Mallard  
Northern Pintail  
Blue-winged Teal  
Green-winged Teal  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Osprey

Herring Gull  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Mourning Dove  
Rock Pigeon  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Eastern Phoebe  
Blue Jay  
Common Raven  
American Crow  
Tree Swallow  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
Carolina Wren

Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
American Robin  
Gray Catbird  
European Starling  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Palm Warbler  
Common Yellowthroat  
Northern Cardinal  
Song Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Common Grackle  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
American Goldfinch  
House Sparrow

## An Invitation to Fyke Members

George Rand and Pamela Ryder have invited Fyke members to visit their 135 acres of forest, field, stream, and pond in North Harpersfield, NY. More information including information to read before your visit, directions, contact numbers, waiver, lodging and area attractions, and a map of the property trials will be available on the Fyke website [www.fykenature.org](http://www.fykenature.org) soon!



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## Mugwort Soup, from Martha Stewart Living, March 2013

Mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) is one of about 300 species in the *Artemisia* genus. It's what you want for this soup; the others may be too bitter. Watercress will also work; although the soup won't taste the same, it will still be delicious. Makes 8 cups, serves 6.



### Ingredients:

3 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 medium onion or 3 small spring onions, thinly sliced (about 2 cups)  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
10 medium white mushrooms (about 7 ounces), sliced  
1 large Yukon Gold or russet potato (about 14 ounces), peeled and cut into 2-inch pieces  
6 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth  
1 cup heavy cream  
4 ounces tender mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) or watercress leaves (about 8 cups)  
Tabasco  
Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper

### Directions:

1. Melt butter in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion and saute until softened, about 4 minutes. Add garlic and mushrooms; cook until softened, about 3 minutes. Add potato and broth; bring to a boil. Reduce heat. Simmer until potato is tender, about 20 minutes.
2. Add cream and mugwort, and simmer 10 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool slightly. Puree soup in batches in a blender until smooth. Return soup to pot. Add Tabasco to taste; season with salt and pepper.

**Please note, from WebMD: Allergies:** Mugwort may cause an allergic reaction in individuals who are allergic to the Asteraceae/Compositae plant family. Members of this family include ragweed, chrysanthemums, marigolds, daisies, and many other herbs. Mugwort might also cause an allergic reaction in people who are allergic to birch, celery, or wild carrot. There is also some concern that mugwort might cause allergic reactions in people with allergies to honey or royal jelly. Mugwort pollen might cause reactions in people who are allergic to tobacco. It's UNSAFE to use mugwort if you are pregnant. Not enough is known about the safety of taking mugwort if you are breast-feeding. Stay on the safe side and avoid use.





## Stiles and Lillian Thomas Scholarship Winner – 2013 -- Part Two

Here is Jessica Dowicz's award winning scholarship essay:

I was always interested in the environment, in 7th grade I went to sleep away camp and a week of it consisted of literal camping in the woods, canoeing to each campsite. I think there at camp, I first realized that I wanted to pursue my interest in the environment, I love being outside and understanding the world around me, and being allowed to be hands on. Majoring in environmental science, I will be able to do hands on work and research.



I am passionate about studying the environment because it is something we need to protect and take care of, now more than ever. With the growing threat of global climate change, pollution, and the burning of fossil fuels, limited oil supply, over use of resources, deforestation, and the race for alternative energy, the environment is something people need to put much focus on and that is what I intend on doing. I want to make a significant change and help alter the planet for the better. The green campaign was a start, people are becoming more aware of the problems that we as a human population have submerged ourselves in and now is the time to help ourselves.

I am dedicated to help start helping the Earth become a greener and more natural planet. Educating people about the benefits of recycling, turning off and unplugging appliances when not in use is not enough anymore. The country is oil dependent, as well as many other countries. The BP oil spill was no joke, and even though there were millions of liters of oil dumped into the Gulf of Mexico, BP was just able to pay the fine and move on. For a healthier and sustainable Earth, there needs to be people willing to make a difference and want to.

I want to help the Earth in any way I can and through environmental science I can do that. Studying this in college will give me the opportunities I need in order to accomplish my goals. As more people realize we need to change our habits as a whole human population rather than arguing about policies, the Earth will benefit and we will be thankful in the long run.

I intend on making a difference in the world and that starts by me choosing to study Environmental Science. Through this, a can of worms will then open and I will have all the tools I need to help create a healthier and more sustainable Earth.

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### Celery

Celery, raw  
Develops the jaw,  
But celery, stewed,  
Is more quietly chewed.

Ogden Nash



## Celery Farm 2014 Calendars!

Celery Farm Calendars are available for a donation of \$15.00. The proceeds from Celery Farm calendar donations, after covering costs, will continue to fund the Stiles and Lillian Thomas Scholarship. The Stiles and Lillian Thomas Scholarship was initiated to honor Stiles and Lillian Thomas for their life-long commitment to preservation and conservation. This annual scholarship is awarded to a graduating senior student of Northern Highlands Regional High School who is pursuing a college degree in the environmental sciences.

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## Welcome New Members!

Marianne Ansari, Mahwah  
Susan Dougherty, Hawthorne  
Rose & John Marsh, Allendale  
Diane Palacios, Ridgewood  
John Rand, Midland Park  
Catherine Shaw, Allendale



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## Time to Renew Your Fyke Dues

The new membership year for Fyke starts September 1, 2013 and ends August 31, 2014. This means that annual dues should be paid now. The dues schedule is: Individual -- \$15.00, and Family -- \$20.00. Checks should be made out to Fyke Nature Association, and mailed to John Brotherton, 249 E. Crescent Avenue, Mahwah, NJ 07430. Thank you!

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## Here's an Easy Way to Support Fyke

Don't forget we now have a direct link to AMAZON from our website. Fyke does not endorse any particular merchant but just log onto **www.fykenature.org** and you will find the link on the first page. Every month AMAZON sends us a sales commission check. Thank you for your participation.

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**The Fyke Nature Association**, a 501 (c) (3) organization, meets the fourth Friday of every month except June, July, August, and December at the **Allendale Municipal Building**, 500 W. Crescent Avenue, Allendale, NJ 07401. Meetings and membership are open to all. Annual dues: Individual -- \$15.00; Family -- \$20.00. For further information, write to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, visit our website **www.fykenature.org**, or call Mike Limatola, President, at 201-739-8062. The Newsletter is published four times a year and manuscripts and artwork are welcome. Interim Editor: Carol Flanagan, carolflana@aol.com. Drawings: Nancy Bristow and Kathryn Sjolander. Production: Molly Gardener, Herb Gardener, and John Brotherton.

**The deadline for the Spring 2014 issue is January 22, 2014.** Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to carolflana@aol.com.

