



Winter Newsletter

Vol. 62 – No. 4 – 2016

www.fykenature.org

Calendar of Events

December 2, 2016 – 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 nature related slide shows, videos, artwork, photographs, poems, or collections with your fellow members. All presentations should be of 5 minutes or less duration so that we can maintain a reasonable total meeting time. See the article on page 3 for information on preparing and presenting digital slide shows and videos.

December 17, 2016 -- Christmas Bird Count, see page 3 for details on the CBC.

January 27, 2017 -- Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building, Avian Rehabilitation or How to Live with a Loon in Your Bathtub, Giselle Smisko

A fuzzy ball of a bird has just fallen 30 feet from its nest and now sits in your hands; what do you do? Many people have faced this dilemma and found themselves feeling more helpless than the bird. This slide presentation handles that situation and many others that confront wildlife rehabilitators. Practical information will be offered on how people can prevent many of the problems that threaten our wildlife.

February 24, 2017 – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Birdsong: Nature's Chorus, Gabriel Willow

Possibly one of the most delightful behaviors birds have evolved is their ability to sing. Birdsong has inspired poets and musicians for millennia, and may be the source behind our own song and music. As any serious birder knows, learning birdsong is also essential to locating and identifying birds; many species are much easier to hear than to see. In this program, naturalist and educator Gabriel Willow will explore the world of birdsong, the morphology and biology behind it, and how to identify some of the more common songs in our area.

Use what talents you possess; the woods would be very silent if no birds sang there except those that sang best.

~~Henry Van Dyke



Welcome New Members!

Robin & Gary Emery, Glen Rock
Patricia & Jack Linard, Ramsey
MaryAnn Osgoodby, Waldwick
Shimon Neuman, Monsey, NY
Lori Origlio, Pompton Lakes



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**The Big Sit! 2016 — Our 22th Year**  
By Carol Flanagan

Thanks to all the members of our team, the Celery Stalkers, who participated our 21st 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 sit inside a circle 17 feet in diameter for 24 hours, and count all the bird species you see or hear. Our circle is centered at the Pirie–Mayhood Tower at the Celery Farm.



Our total this year was 45 species. Two new species for The Big Sit! were seen, Cackling Goose and Least Sandpiper, bringing our cumulative total to 125. A Mandarin Duck was also seen but not added to the list as it was most likely an escapee.

**Thank you to our Participants:**



John Bird  
Julie Bramble  
John Brotherton  
Michael Buckley  
Mike Limatola

Doug Morel  
Kurt Muenz  
Michael Tat  
Kevin Watson  
Charley West

**Species list:**

Cackling Goose  
Canada Goose  
Wood Duck  
American Black Duck  
Mallard  
Blue-winged Teal  
Green-winged Teal  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Great Blue Heron  
Turkey Vulture  
Sharp-shinned Hawk  
Cooper's Hawk  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Killdeer  
Least Sandpiper

Pectoral Sandpiper  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Mourning Dove  
Chimney Swift  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Eastern Phoebe  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Common Raven  
Tree Swallow  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
Red-breasted Nuthatch

White-breasted Nuthatch  
Carolina Wren  
American Robin  
Gray Catbird  
European Starling  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Savannah Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow  
Eastern Towhee  
Northern Cardinal  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Common Grackle  
American Goldfinch  
House Sparrow

## Members Night Presentation Information

By Kurt Muenz



If you're not familiar with preparing digital images (cropping, resizing, other enhancement) and creating presentations, I'd be pleased to assist or do this for you, providing you get the input to me prior to November 25, the sooner the better. For slide show presentations please transmit your images to me by e-mail before the deadline. I'll convert them to PowerPoint slide shows for projection and test them beforehand on the combination of my laptop and Fyke's projector. I can prepare them as an automated slide show, where you only make comments at the start, or as a traditional slide show with remarks as each slide is shown. In such case plan to come to the meeting early to go over the simple means of advancing or reversing slides.

If you're submitting a video that's too big to email, it can be on a CD or DVD disc, or on a flash drive. I'll incorporate and pre-test such videos as well. Again the sooner I get your images or videos, the better. If you don't need the above help, it would still be preferable to get your finished presentation to me by the deadline. That way it can also be pre-tested and will be presented from my laptop along with other programs. Thus we'll have fewer connection switch-overs and a smoother meeting.

Alternately you may use your own laptop in conjunction with Fyke's projector. We've experienced a few problems in the past with such non pre-tested hook-ups. Therefore, I'm again planning for those using their own laptops to be the first presenters. If there's a problem with a switch-over, that presentation will be skipped but can be tried again toward the end of the meeting.

Don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments, [elkumu@aceweb.com](mailto:elkumu@aceweb.com) or 201-447-0107.

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Ramsey Christmas Bird Count - 2016

By John Brotherton



Planning has started for our 64th annual Christmas Bird Count to be held Saturday, December 17, 2016. The count is part of the 117th 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 34 counted 80 species.

The leading counts in the US were in Texas and California. In New Jersey, the leader among 30 counts was Cape May. We hope to exceed 80 species and we will be on the lookout for Cackling Goose, Northern Goshawk, Eared Grebe, Wild Turkey, Spotted Towhee and Brown-headed Cowbird. We also hope for Ruffed Grouse, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Redpoll, and Pine Siskin.

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 Lisa Fanning. If you would like to join one of the teams 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.

Time to Renew Your Fyke Dues

The new membership year for Fyke started September 1, 2016 and ends August 31, 2017. 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!

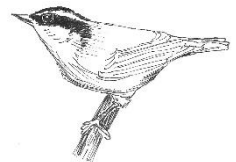
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## Field and Feeder Notes

By Judith Cinquina

*The Red-breasted Nuthatch, a tiny bird weighing only about as much as two nickels, tackles a challenging homemaking task. Unlike the local White-breasted...which seek(s) out and use(s) existing shelters, this nuthatch hammers out a nest cavity in solid wood...To excavate an entire nest hole..., (it) has to start early...By March 27, after almost two weeks of labor, when the snow was melting and the ice on the beaver pond had a ring of water around the edge, only the tip of a tail showed when the bird worked. I recognized the female (by her paler head and chest coloration) as the one doing the heavy work....The male stayed in the vicinity and occasionally made a series of long, nasal calls that sounded like aank. Now and then he flew to the nest hole, peeked in, and chattered to her in apparent excitement, but he never set a foot or wing inside the entrance...I suspected that, after about twenty-eight days of work, the nest site was finished. The amount of effort seemed extraordinary: a robin can build its nest in a couple of days, and some birds build hardly any nest at all. These nuthatches had produced a site for the nest, but after nearly a month of work they still had to build it.*

~~ One Wild Bird at a Time, Bernd Heinrich, 2016



Smaller than a chickadee and cuter, with a black and white face, rufous underparts and an endearing tin-horn-like call, Red-breasted Nuthatches have been bailing out of the north and turning up all over our area. Charlie West dubbed one the BOD (bird of the day) at the August 28 Hour on the Tower at the CF (Celery Farm). Like those passing daily over the Mount Peter Hawk Watch, Charlie wrote that its aank-aank toots announced its presence. September 1 brought one to Mark Kantrowitz's Hillsdale yard for a long visit, and two more turned up in a hemlock at Betty McDonnell's Mahwah home that same day. Forced to irrupt when spruces and pines fail to produce the cone seeds they prefer, Red-breasted Nuthatches are accustomed to migration, unlike their more-sedentary White-breasted cousins. Found from sea to shining sea in N. America, the Red-breasted is our only nuthatch to cross the Atlantic Ocean and turn up in Europe as a vagrant. (Ghalambor, Cameron K. and Thomas E. Marten, 1999, Birds of N. America). Red-breasteds reject our nest boxes but will visit our bird feeders for sunflower seeds and suet if they stay for the winter. If not, we may encounter them again in late April or early May on their return trip home. Sometimes Purple Finches irrupt with this nuthatch, and a few of them were spotted in Allendale and Mahwah, mostly females or immature males who don't acquire their male plumage until they're two-years old. Betty McDonnell reported the most, with at least 10 visiting her Mahwah window feeder.

Overall, the fall migration quietly passed over our parched habitat with little fanfare or notable fallouts, with one remarkable exception. On October 2, with fog and moist heavy air grounding all migrants, Doug Morel scored 16 warbler species at Halifax in Mahwah, including 2 Tennessee, an Orange-crowned, a Blackburnian, 80 Palm, a Prairie, and 2 Wilson's. The Orange-crowned is especially interesting. It's a very drab and uncommon fall migrant, usually seen late in the season, October through December, and sometimes found on Christmas Counts, primarily along our coast. Boyle (The Birds of NJ, 2011) estimates 20 seen a year, and that covers all of NJ. Altogether, Doug bagged 53 species on that foggy, wet day. Other highlights were a Bald Eagle, 2 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks, 2 Indigo Buntings, Blue-headed Vireo, 5 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 2 Brown Thrashers, and a Savannah Sparrow. It pays to get out there, even in bad weather.



Sometimes, the best birds are right outside your door. On October 10, Stephanie Seymour had her own hawk watch right over her Ringwood home, racking up 8 Sharp-shinned, 4 Cooper's, 4 Bald Eagles, and 6 Red-tails, four of them migrants. Fortunately, she had her camera with her. She spotted a large raptor with white primary patches and immediately guessed it was an immature Golden Eagle. She grabbed two very good photos, confirming her identification.

Betty McDonnell also didn't have to go far to get a great bird. She had just said goodbye to weekend guests on October 17, when she saw a strange bird dive into the "rushes" next to her pond. She waited, and the bird emerged and flew up into a small tree, and "there we studied each other for probably ten minutes," Betty wrote. She continued, "I saw the gray patched eye encircled with deep yellow or orange and the white throat and belly and dark streaks on (the) sides and dark and white patterned feathers on the back." This Saltmarsh Sparrow was a new bird for her yard and a rather rare find anywhere in the Fyke area. Occasionally one turns up at the CF or DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst. The last recorded at the CF was October 26, 2012 in the field at the end of Green Way, but the majority prefers our coastal marshes.

On August 26, a Baltimore Oriole, "perched on the highest possible twig of a large tree, glowing and brilliant in the morning sunlight" and led Enid Hayflick of Ridgewood to wonder when do they usually head south. Boyle states that orioles are usually gone by late September, but some do linger and even turn up on Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's). According to John Brotherton's meticulous CBC records, Fyke members have spotted Baltimore Orioles on four CBC's since 1952. The latest was one found in 2004. There is a slim chance that 2016 could produce another. Simon Streatfeild discovered two along the Ramapo River in Mahwah on October 13, already a late date, and this area is part of our Ramsey CBC circle. Other highlights found by Simon included, a Hermit Thrush, Lincoln's Sparrow, four E. Towhees, a female Scarlet Tanager, and a Peregrine Falcon lured in by at least 50 Rock Doves and the promise of an easy feast. According to Gaby Schmitt, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird, another should-have-been-gone species was spotted by the Hour-on-the-Tower crew, October 3.

Enid counted between eight and 10 C. Nighthawks near Graydon Pool, Ridgewood at dusk, on August 26. The next day, Stephanie counted 13 over her Ringwood yard. By all reports, this species, which used to nest on the flat rooftops of buildings in towns and cities, is in serious decline. No one has reported substantial numbers in our area since 2009 when Mimi Brauch counted 150 over the CF. Four American Pipits were early migrants on September 30. Rosemarie Widmer found them hunting the bric-a-brac left in the drained pool at Darlington Park in Ramsey. Usually they arrive around Columbus Day. This ground-nesting and tail-bobbing species is circumpolar and nests on arctic tundra and mountaintops but can be found in large flocks on beaches and cultivated fields during the fall in our area. Although they migrate south into Mexico and Central America, they can linger into December and later in our area, if there is little snow and mild temperatures. On January 1, 2013, at least 60 were on the landfill along Disposal Road at DeKorte. Also at Darlington, September 17, Rosemarie found three Pied-billed Grebes.



A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker turned up in Alice Leurck's Ramsey yard, September 26. Another was at Darlington interacting with a pair of Red-bellied Woodpeckers, October 14. The 14th also brought the usual complement of migrant sparrows to the edges of the phragmites around Crestwood Lake in Allendale, including an immature White-crowned, one Vesper and five Savannah. Doug Morel spotted a Swainson's Thrush at the CF, October 1, and two were in my Upper Saddle River birdbath, two days later. Rosemarie reported a Gray-cheeked Thrush keeping company with a Hermit Thrush, along Beech Road near the Monksville Reservoir on October 18. Boyle writes that the Gray-cheeked is a "shy and inconspicuous" migrant, especially in the fall. Rosemarie has the patience to sit and wait for birds to appear, and usually uses her car as a blind. Her patience often pays off.

Parts of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut are in the throes of a serious drought, and federal officials have declared it a natural disaster area. According to an article by Jess Bidgood in the NY Times, September 27, the drought is causing "Bears and other wild animals" to venture "into human habitats in search of food because there is little in their own." Perhaps this is part of the reason Red-breasted Nuthatches are irrupting into our area and south.



Black-capped Chickadees are also on the move, and my guess is that many from the far north will be at our feeders this winter. On October 18, I counted 79 chickadees, singing "phoebe" and "dee-dee-dee" as they moved over Mount Peter. According to Birds of NJ, Walsh, 1999, other chickadee irruptions occurred in the falls of 1982, 1984, and 1995. Boreal Chickadees sometimes get caught up in these irruptions and turn up in our area, especially around the Pequannock Watershed, although none have been reported since 1984. The first known NJ Boreal Chickadee specimen was collected in Ramsey, November 1913 (Walsh, et al, 1999). Needless to say, if you encounter a large flock of chickadees this fall-winter, take a count and certainly search through them for an overall darker, slightly larger, brown capped individual.

Keep your feeders clean and full, and let us know what you observe. 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. Or send your observations to me at [judycing@optonline.net](mailto:judycing@optonline.net).



### **New Information Sheets About The Celery Farm**

Gabriele Schmitt, Fyke Board member, is working on Celery Farm information sheets. Gaby tells us she is planning to make these information sheets an informal series and will post them on the back of the Franklin Turnpike parking lot kiosk.

Gaby's reports will compare native, beneficial plants with invasive species. The first one, explains the difference between good Swamp Rose and the bad Multiflora Rose. The goal is to inform Celery Farm visitors and help them understand when they see Fyke members pulling up plants or cutting down vines. And, maybe we'll have a few interested folks volunteer!

See Gaby's first information sheet on the next page.

Thanks Gaby!!



## The Celery Farm

By Tom Mitchell

What once was a peat bog then drained to be a farm  
Now repurposed as a shallow lake almost a mile around  
A protected natural area a refuge for birds and birders  
Made possible by dedicated volunteers.

We frequent this modest plot of wildlife habitat  
The water collecting ducks following the seasons  
The land hosting song birds along the margin.  
We look for everything living that finds a niche here.

Joining the membership of the Fyke Association  
For the stewardship opportunity to contribute  
Knowing there is a warden watching out  
Taking care to keep the sanctuary safe.

I wish the people who use this place as an exercise track  
Would go instead to the former pig farm in Wyckoff  
Or the Saddle River flood zone six mile walkway  
Or anyplace else not to disturb the skittery birds.

There's no way for me to pretend the place is pristine.  
What I see makes it plain we are in the Anthropocene.  
If nothing else were known or noticed our human impact  
Manifest in the sewer manhole covers next to the path.

Whatever open space remains in our vicinity is like this  
Wetlands or steep slopes difficult to build on  
Cleared of the old growth trees and anything of value  
Leaving us to try to restore the native vegetation.

Bringing back chestnut or elm trees is not possible  
Though perhaps the phragmites and burning bush can be curtailed.  
To make a natural area takes active land management  
A kind of garden cultivation weeding out invasive species.

It would be nice to take a photograph without seeing  
Those millionaire mansions across the lake  
Or those white PVC pipes sticking out of the water  
That I might picture the illusion of undisturbed nature.

But the engineering is what attracts the feathered ones  
And those of us who seek them out with our scopes and cameras  
Planting the mounted nesting boxes to invite pairings  
Building platforms placed to afford the best views.

So here we are engaged with our imperfect world  
Doing what we can to make it a better place  
Enjoying our time here now while we may  
Planning to bestow this gift to posterity.





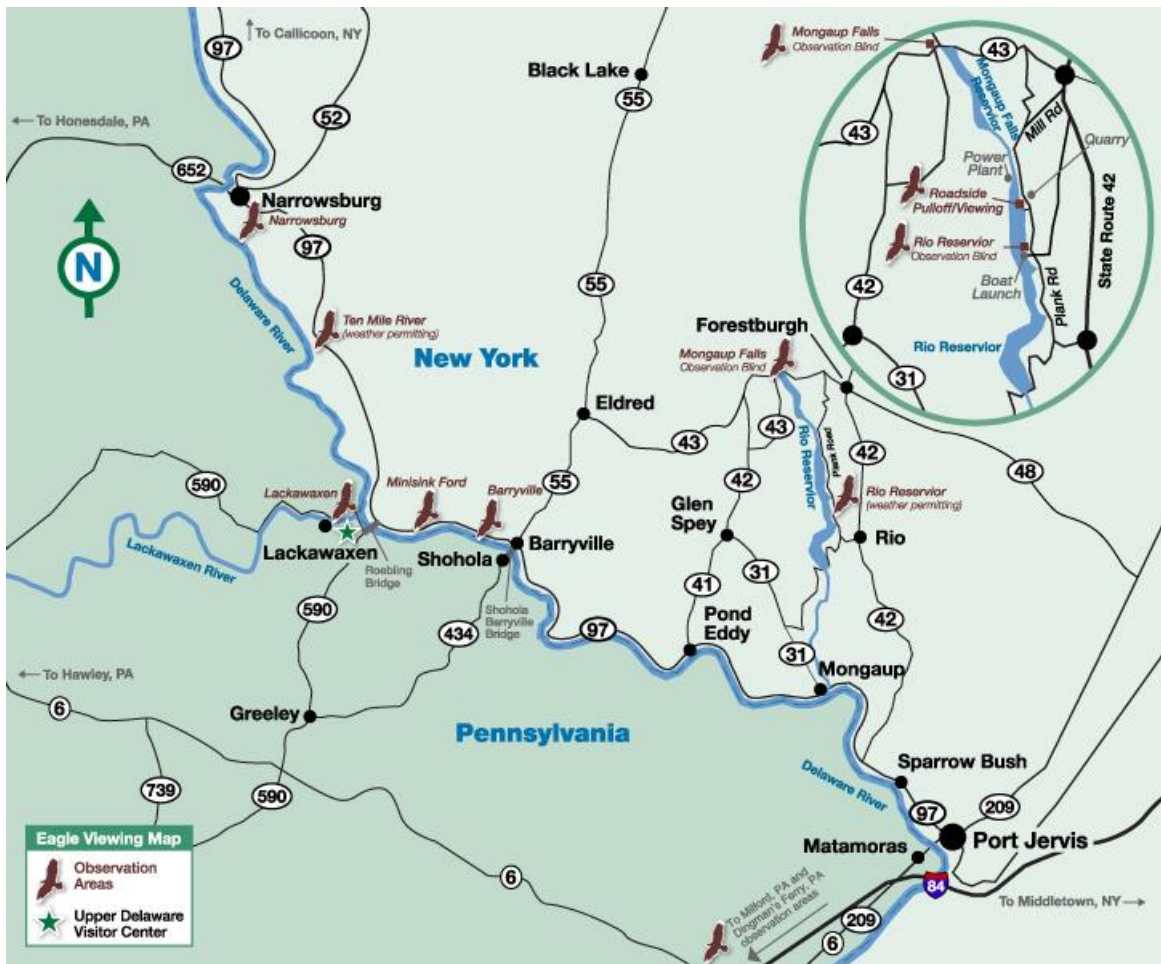
## Winter Eagles on the Delaware River

From the Delaware Highlands Conservancy website

The Delaware Highlands Conservancy is an accredited land trust dedicated to conserving the natural heritage and quality of life in the Upper Delaware River region in partnership with the region's landowners and communities. is an accredited land trust dedicated to conserving the natural heritage and quality of life in the Upper Delaware River region in partnership with the region's landowners and communities.

Every winter up to 150-200 bald eagles migrate to this region. They are seeking a reliable food source and undisturbed habitat so they can survive the cold winter months. When the lakes, rivers and reservoirs north of our region freeze over, the eagles head this way, where open water on the Delaware and Hudson Rivers and the associated tributaries and reservoirs provide a source of fish. Some bald eagles will fly nearly 900 miles from their breeding ground to winter in this region.

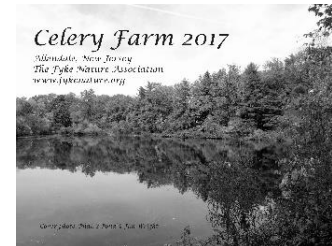
Here is their map of viewing areas. This trip is highly recommended by your editor!



## Ways to Support Fyke:

**Holiday Shopping?** While doing your online holiday shopping, don't forget Fyke has a direct link to AMAZON from our website. Fyke does not endorse any particular merchant. Log onto [www.fykenature.org](http://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!**

**2017 Celery Farm Calendars!** Celery Farm Calendars are available for a donation of \$15.00 to Fyke.



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### Fyke Board of Trustees:

|                          |                  |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| President:               | Mike Limatola    |
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| Newsletter:   | Carol Flanagan   |
| Programs:     | Penny Whitlock   |
| Publicity:    | Gabriele Schmitt |
| Webmaster:    | Kevin Watson     |

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**The Fyke Nature Association**, a 501 (c) (3) organization, meets at the Allendale Municipal Building, 500 W. Crescent Avenue, Allendale, NJ 07401 on the fourth Friday of every month January to May, and in September and October. The winter meeting is the first Friday in December. (No meetings in June, July, August, and November.)

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](http://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](mailto:carolflana@aol.com). Production: Molly Gardener, Herb Gardener, and John Brotherton.



**The deadline for the Spring 2017 issue is January 25, 2017.** Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to [carolflana@aol.com](mailto:carolflana@aol.com).