


Fyke Nature Association Winter Newsletter Vol. 64 – No. 4 – 2018

In Memory of Herb Gardener

I am saddened to report that Herb Gardener, a long-time friend and Fyke member died on September 5, 2018. Writing under his pen name, Nat Catcher, he was a frequent contributor to our newsletter. He computerized our member list and helped in newsletter production. His skills with audio visual equipment were put to good use at our meetings. Our deepest condolences go out to his wife Molly and their entire family.

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## Calendar of Events

### November 30, 2018 – 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 five minutes or less duration so that we can maintain a reasonable total meeting time. See the article on page 2 for information on preparing and presenting digital slide shows and videos.

### December 15, 2018 – Christmas Bird Count

The CBC co-compilers are Rob and Lisa Fanning. If you would like to join one of the teams, contact Lisa at [la.fanning@yahoo.com](mailto:la.fanning@yahoo.com). See page 3 for details on the CBC.



### January 25, 2019 -- Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Red Knots, Stephanie Feigin

Every May, up to half a million shore-birds descend on Delaware Bay to restore energy reserves lost after long flights from the Southern Hemisphere. They will double their weight on the protein-rich eggs of the 420 million-year old horseshoe crab, before continuing to the Arctic. But this story has changed. Over harvesting of horseshoe crabs in the 1990s, has drastically reduced the number of eggs available for shore- birds. Along with other impacts, this has caused up to 80% reduction in the shorebird populations. Join Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey's Wildlife Ecologist Stephanie Feigin in a presentation about shorebirds, horseshoe crabs, how their populations have declined and our efforts to protect these important species and their habitats along Delaware Bay.

**February 22, 2019 – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building  
Okavango, The river that never meets the ocean, Kumar Patel**

Ecosystems are dynamically interacting systems of organisms, along with the communities they make up and the abiotic (non-living) components of their environment. While all living things form the ecosystem with our planet, none have a greater impact than humans. As we all know, the future of the human race and the hospitability of our planet depends on how well we understand these concepts and the mechanisms we devise to preserve this sanctuary for our grandchildren and their grandchildren. To understand ecosystems, there is no better living laboratory than the Okavango Delta in Botswana. Join my daughter Yogita and me on a journey of discovery, fascination and excitement through this desolate, magical land. Along the way, I hope you will appreciate, as well as we did, the beauty of some of the amazing creatures we share this planet with. I know all of you are dedicated to conservation. This is just a reminder to show you what we are trying to preserve.

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**Have You Renewed Your Fyke Membership?
Kurt Muenz, Treasurer**

Dues have been coming in slowly this year. If you're among the procrastinators, please reach for your checkbook or go to the website and pitch in now. That way you can enjoy the Celery Farm, a field trip or a meeting with a clear conscience.

Dues are \$25 for a family and \$20 for an individual. To make the payment conveniently online using any major credit card or PayPal, visit www.fykenature.org. Use the link on the home page to get to the Payments and Donations page. You may also continue to join, renew or donate by mail. Checks should be made out to Fyke Nature Association and mailed to Fyke Nature Association, Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446.

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**Members Night Presentation Information  
By Kurt Muenz**

Members Night is a chance to share nature related slide shows, videos, artwork, photographs, poems, collections, etc., with fellow members. All presentations should be of five minutes or less duration so that we can maintain a reasonable total meeting time.

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 16, the sooner the better.

For slide show presentations please get 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 the latter case plan to come to the meeting early to go over the simple means of advancing or reversing slides. If you submit a video, I'll incorporate and pre-test it as well.

We'll again use my Drop Box account that will enable us to exchange much larger files than can be sent by email. This should do away with multiple emails if you're sending pictures and eliminate transmitting pictures, PowerPoints or videos by disc or flash drive.

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 tested and will be presented from my laptop along with other programs. Thus, we'll have fewer connection switch-overs and a smoother meeting. My laptop will be connected to the meeting room speakers for better sound projection. So, if your program includes audio, do get it to me ahead of time to take advantage. 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-tested hook-ups. I'm again planning for any 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. If using your own laptop, please be sure to let me know ahead of time.

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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Christmas Bird Count – 2018
By Lisa Ann Fanning

The 66th annual Ramsey Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held Saturday, December 15, 2018, as part of Audubon's 119th CBC. Teams circles will 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. Teams will be out all day, counting birds in each of those areas to help identify trends in species. Some teams will be in search of nocturnal birds.

According to the Audubon website, "The Christmas Bird Count (CBC) is a long-standing program of the National Audubon Society, with over 100 years of citizen science involvement. It is an early-winter bird census, where thousands of volunteers across the U.S., Canada, and many countries in the Western Hemisphere go out over a 24-hour period on one calendar day to count birds."

The co-compilers are Rob and Lisa Fanning. If you would like to join one of the teams, contact Lisa at la.fanning@yahoo.com.

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.



For more information about Audubon's CBC history, rules and data, please visit: <https://www.audubon.org/conservation/science/christmas-bird-count>

WANTED By Judy Cinquina

What do University of Oxford, the University of Mexico, Hawkwatch International, and Hawk Mountain Sanctuary have in common? They have all requested Mount Peter data for research projects in 2018. Why Mount Peter? Because our lookout has accumulated 61 years of fall data, entered it all into Hawkcount.org, and can provide researchers with ample data to analyze. Since 2005, Fyke has been sponsoring the Mount Peter count and enabling the hawk watch to continue collecting valuable data about our raptor populations and their migration patterns. We are grateful for Fyke's support and our ability to provide data to the research projects listed below:



Eagles and Wind Energy: Our fall Bald and Golden Eagle counts between 1990 and 2014 were used by researchers to determine the best survey protocols for migrating eagle detection at prospective wind energy sites. Wind energy development, especially on ridge tops, is increasing in the United States and Canada and may affect Bald and Golden Eagle populations through direct mortality. Mount Peter was one of 22 ridge-top raptor migration monitoring sites in the Pacific, Rocky Mountain, Intermountain, and Appalachian flyways included in this research. Eric Chabot, the researcher planned to submit the results of the research to the Journal of Wildlife Management.

Raptor Migration Forecasts: Benjamin Van Doren is a PhD student at the University at Oxford in the UK is studying bird migration. In collaboration with colleagues at Cornell, he's been working on forecasting nocturnal bird migration and understanding its drivers. This spring, they posted live continental migration forecasts on <http://birdcast.info>, which were viewed hundreds of thousands of times.

Benjamin is interested in trying to apply their methods to diurnal hawk migration as well. For this, he would pair observations from North American count sites with concurrent weather observations to learn associations between atmospheric conditions and the intensity of hawk migration.

Training Models to Analyze Count Data and Climatic Variables: Ruth Delgado from the National Autonomous University of Mexico is developing a project for a data science specialization that applies newly developed machine learning analysis, specifically Artificial Neural Networks on ecological data. She's hoping to improve accuracy on species abundance predictions and will be using bird count data and climatic variables to analyze and train models. The model performance and prediction ability depends on the amount of data used to train the model, therefore it is important to use large databases. Mount Peter is one of 19 watch sites that will contribute data to this project.

Red-shouldered Hawk Migration Trends: A Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Science Trainee is using our data to examine Red-shouldered migration in the eastern flyway. Fifteen watch sites have been selected with variable topography—ridges, coasts, plains, foothills—to examine weather factors that produce larger flights.

Field and Feeder Notes By Judith Cinquina

This is an irruption (flight) year for winter finches in the East. Cone and birch seed crops are poor to low in most of Ontario and the Northeast, with a few exceptions such as Newfoundland which has an excellent spruce crop. It will be a quiet winter in the North Woods. Expect flights of winter finches into southern Ontario, southern Quebec, Maritime Provinces, New York and New England States, with some finches going farther south into the United States. Stock your bird feeders because many birds will have a difficult time finding natural foods this winter. This forecast applies primarily to Ontario and adjacent provinces and states. Spruce, birch and mountain-ash crops are much better in Western Canada.

2018-2019 Winter Finch Forecast by Ron Pittaway

The Hour on the Tower crew spotted the first Purple Finch at the Celery Farm (CF), September 16, according to Gaby Schmitt. Doug Morel noted a dozen there on October 6. By mid-October, Simon Streatfeild reported “more Purple Finches than I have ever seen,” at Halifax, and at least two dozen were noted at Ringwood Manor by my birding class on the 18th. The 21st seemed to be the magic day for feeder reports of Purple Finches by both Barbara Dilger in Ridgewood and Betty McDonnell in Mahwah. They prefer black oil sunflower seeds. Betty observed that the finches tried to “bully their positions” onto her window feeders. According to *Birds at Your Feeder* (1999) by Dunn & Tessaglia-Hymes, Purple Finches express dominance with a head-forward-bill-open threat display, and it’s the duller individuals that dominate, not the brightly colored adult males. It is a fallacy that all the brownish individuals in a flock are females. Purple Finches don’t acquire their adult plumage until they are two years old. Both male and female young resemble the female, so when you observe a female-like individual singing, it’s probably a young male in training. Kevin Watson posted a wonderful close-up of an adult male on our Yahoo site, demonstrating how raspberry (not purple) their chests and crowns are colored. Similar male House Finches lack both the pure raspberry coloring and the peaked crown of their cousin and are browner overall.



© Kevin Watson

Birch, alder and conifer seed crops are generally poor to low in most of the Northeast, according to Pittaway, so there is a slight chance we could have Pine Siskins and Common Redpolls at our feeders this winter too. Pittaway was correct, for on October 28, Betty McDonnell did indeed have Siskins at her feeders. She wrote, “This morning several Pine Siskins joined my many (20?) Purple Finches and Goldfinches.” Pittaway also states that both Blue Jays and Red-breasted Nuthatches are “linked to irruptions of boreal finches,” and both species have



been on the move. Our Jays can share North Jersey’s heavy acorn crop with their northern cousins and have no need to roam, but Red-breasted Nuthatches have been deserting Canada. They’ve been observed almost daily at the Mount Peter and State Line hawk watches. Brian Kenny found one at the CF, September 29, three hunted venerable White Pines at Overpeck Park in Teaneck on October 4.

On September 16, Jim Wright hiked to the top of High Mountain in Wayne Township and North Haledon with seven birders in tow, hoping to catch a broad-winged Hawk flight. In a two-hour stretch mid-day, they managed to net 6 Osprey, 5 Sharp-shinned Hawks, 6 Broad-wings, 6 Red-tails and 2 Am. Kestrels. That's not a bad haul. Stiles Thomas found dozens of Broad-wings heading SW over his Allendale yard, at 4 p.m. on the 19th. The Hour on the Tower crew also managed to dip into the migration on October 21. Charlie West wrote, "with only one hand available for the bins and the other hand needed to hang on in the 25-35 knot winds" we scored Osprey, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks and Am. Kestrel.

Stephanie Seymour had a magical raptor stream over her Ringwood deck, October 12. She counted 168 raptors, including 6 Bald Eagles, an immature Goshawk, a Merlin and a Peregrine. Although the Gos was an amazing find, it was her 29 Am. Kestrels that all should celebrate. This little falcon has been declining for years in the Northeast, but recently it seems to be bouncing back. The Shawangunk Grasslands had all five of their Kestrel boxes occupied this summer, and maybe nest boxes are giving Kestrel numbers a boost. The Mount Peter Hawk Watch bagged 41 on Stephanie's magical day and is heading towards our best Kestrel year since 2012. State Line tallied 48 that day and also tallied a high of 143 over September 16 and 17 and is heading towards their best Kestrel tally since 2011 when they became a full-time lookout. And finally, Cape May counted an unbelievable 5,406 on the 12th. I'd call that a good Kestrel season in the Northeast.

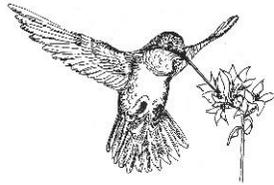
The Nighthawk news is not so rosy. Stephanie tallied 22 over her Ringwood yard, August 19 and Jim Wright noted 16 over the CF on the 24th. Although late August marks the peak of their fall migration, those numbers are sad compared to the hundreds that once moved through our state. The last "big" day I can remember was September 5, 2006, a warm, drizzly morning when I counted 420 streaming over and around the CF, with some mixing with the swallows over Lake Appert. They used to nest on the flat gravel rooftops in our urban cities, but those sites no longer exist. I searched eBird for recent NJ reports, but none topped one count of 25, and most scattered reports I found indicated one or two seen.



Kurt Muenz's report from the George Washington Chimney Swift roost in Ridgewood was much cheerier. He wrote: "For the first time in almost four years, Swifts are roosting at the GW School." He explained that "prior to their migration to the Amazon Basin mainly in Peru, the swifts gather and stage. Often large numbers will circle and roost in one chimney" between mid-August and early October. On August 23 he counted 60 over the chimney, and wrote, "My hope is that this is a new generation rediscovering this highly suitable roost and thus the forerunner of something grander in the future." Kurt got his wish. Counts in late September and October were more like they used to be: September 22nd – 405 and 29th – 395, October 3rd – 520 and 13th – 585. That last date was the latest season's peak he has ever witnessed at the school. By the 25th, GW swifts were gone. Others were still on the move, however. On October 28, Mark Kantrowitz wrote, "A good dozen circling over Met Life Stadium this afternoon. The Giants should be as swift."

Sandpipers had a difficult time finding mudflats with all the rain we've had, but we did manage to scare up a few good specimens. October 4, my students and I found three very late migrant Solitary Sandpipers at Overpeck Park near the stables. They hunted a large puddle provided by a recent rain. We observed one vibrating its foot to scare up prey. Johnsguard explains in his *Plovers, Sandpipers, and Snipes of the World* (1981), that this is a "favorite method of foraging" and that they walk slowly, "vibrating the leading foot, thus stirring up the

bottom sufficiently to disturb insects but not so greatly as to muddy the water and obscure the view.” According to Boyle’s *Birds of NJ*, their main flight south is from mid-July to early September. Two days later, Doug Morel found two Pectoral Sandpipers at the CF and a flock of 25 Semipalmated that circled the marsh but couldn’t land because the water level was too high. A Greater Yellowlegs showed up for the CF Big Sit, on the 14th.



Up to three Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were regular at John and Rozelisa Marsh’s Allendale feeder. The last one, a female made its final visit on September 24th before heading to Mexico or Costa Rico. The sexes migrate separately, and the males are first to arrive and depart. The day before, the Hour on the Tower gang enjoyed a Blackburnian Warbler from their perch on the Pirie Platform, according to Gaby Schmitt. Betty McDonnell had just seen her first fall Scarlet Tanager in his bright, yellow-green plumage at Darlington Park in Ramsey, October 4. She arrived home in Mahwah to find more in her Dogwoods, probably dining on their fruits. Dogwood berries are rich in lipids, the type of fat that will fuel their migration to Central America.

White-throated Sparrows seem to invade everywhere on the 21st, when flocks were noted in Hawthorne by Carol Flanagan, Wyckoff by Nancy Drabik and here in Upper Saddle River. Sparrows don’t create much excitement, generally, but they can be not only challenging but also beautiful. Barbara Dilger posted photos of White-crowned, Swamp, Lincoln’s and others on our Yahoo site, October 27. They demonstrated how different and beautiful sparrows can be. However, she also wrote about their habitat and how weedy places that they need are disappearing. I want to end this column with her account of one of her favorite birding spots below:

“Over the last week, I have been going to a little piece of land that is next to White’s Pond in Waldwick. A few years ago, it was sold, and a street was put in with plans for building new homes. Unfortunately, it was one of the spots that I often would see the Yellow-crowned Night Heron in years past, as well as other birds and wildlife in this treed lot near the pond. They came in with bulldozers and took down all of the trees but for one pretty crab apple tree on the border line with Borough Park. Construction came to a stop for some reason, for several years now, and all sorts of grasses and plants grew on the piles of dirt left behind and the cleared flat areas.”

“And the birds came back, this time lots of sparrows! In the past week I have seen: Lincoln’s, Savannah, Swamp, White-crowned (immature), White-throated and of course the Song. They sit in the high grasses, on the old construction materials left behind, on the road, and in the crab apple tree. There was also a huge flock of Palm Warblers who were carpeting the ground, every place I looked there was one popping up his head. Purple Finches, Phoebes, Flycatchers, Kingfisher on the pond and hawks above. Sadly, the YC Night Heron has not been seen in several years as far as I know.”



© Barbara Dilger

“I was so happy to find a nice place to bird so close to home and one that I could do so right from my car parked on the new road built for the new houses that never showed up. The bad news - I went back yesterday afternoon and new trucks and equipment have been placed at the site. It looks like they are going to begin work again. Oh progress--Thank goodness for the Celery Farm, saved from suburban sprawl.”

Don't forget to keep your feeders full and clean and please let us know what you see. For information on the latest bird sightings, go to 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 judyqing@optonline.net.

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**The Big Sit! 2018**  
**By Carol Flanagan**

Thanks to all the members of our team, the Celery Stalkers, who participated our 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 count this year was 52 species. No new species for The Big Sit! were added this year so our cumulative total remains at 126.

**Thank you to our Participants:**

Anne Keating, Brian Kenney, Juley McCall, Doug Morel, Gabriele Schmitt, Stiles Thomas, Fred Weber, Charley West, Jim Wright



**Species list:**

- |                        |                         |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Canada Goose           | Downy Woodpecker        |
| Mute Swan              | Hairy Woodpecker        |
| Wood Duck              | Northern Flicker        |
| Blue-winged Teal       | Peregrine Falcon        |
| Northern Shoveler      | Eastern Phoebe          |
| Gadwall                | Blue Jay                |
| American Wigeon        | American Crow           |
| Mallard                | Common Raven            |
| American Black Duck    | Black-capped Chickadee  |
| Green-winged Teal      | Tufted Titmouse         |
| Rock Pigeon            | White-breasted Nuthatch |
| Mourning Dove          | Carolina Wren           |
| Chimney Swift          | Ruby-crowned Kinglet    |
| American Coot          | American Robin          |
| Greater Yellowlegs     | European Starling       |
| Great Blue Heron       | Purple Finch            |
| Great Egret            | American Goldfinch      |
| Black Vulture          | Song Sparrow            |
| Turkey Vulture         | Swamp Sparrow           |
| Northern Harrier       | Red-winged Blackbird    |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk     | Brown-headed Cowbird    |
| Cooper's Hawk          | Common Grackle          |
| Red-shouldered Hawk    | Palm Warbler            |
| Red-tailed Hawk        | Yellow-rumped Warbler   |
| Belted Kingfisher      | Northern Cardinal       |
| Red-bellied Woodpecker | House Sparrow           |

**Welcome New Members!**



Eveline Brezolin, Oakland  
Mathew and Christie Jordan, Allendale, Family Membership  
Ann Malaspina, Ridgewood, Family Membership



**Ways to Support Fyke:**

**1) Holiday Shopping?**

While doing your online holiday shopping, don't forget Fyke has a direct link to AMAZON from our website. It works for all purchases, and it doesn't cost you anything extra. Fyke does not endorse any particular merchant. Log onto [www.fykenature.org](http://www.fykenature.org) and click on "SHOP". On the next page, click on the Amazon logo. Every month AMAZON sends us a sales commission check.

(Yes, Fyke is on the Smile program, but the Smile program only contributes 0.5% to Fyke. The affiliate program contributes 1% to 10% depending on the items purchased.)

So, if you shop on Amazon please go through the Fyke website. Thank you for your participation!

(Fyke does not endorse any particular merchant.)

**2) Celery Farm Calendars, T-shirts, and Caps!**

Celery Farm Calendars, T-shirts, and caps make great gifts for family and friends!



**Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better.**



**~Albert Einstein**

**Fyke Board of Trustees:**

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| 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.)

Note: In 2018 the Winter meeting will be on November 30, 2018.

Meetings and membership are open to all. Annual dues: Individual -- \$20.00; Family -- \$25.00. For further information, write to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, visit our website www.fykenature.org, or contact Mike Limatola, President, mike.limatola@gmail.com. The Newsletter is published four times a year and manuscripts and artwork are welcome. Editor: Carol Flanagan, carolflana@aol.com. Production: Molly Gardener, and Carol Flanagan.



The deadline for the Spring 2019 issue is January 23, 2019. Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to carolflana@aol.com.