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# Fyke Nature Association Spring Newsletter

Vol. 65 — No. 1 — 2019  
www.fykenature.org

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## Calendar of Events

### 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.

### March 9, 2019 — Field Trip: Woodcocks at the Great Swamp NWR



Meet at the Great Swamp at the Heronry parking lot at 4 p.m. There will be some late day birding. Bring a light snack to enjoy while we wait for sunset. Leader: Mike Limatola. Please register for this trip with Mike, [mike.limatola@gmail.com](mailto:mike.limatola@gmail.com).

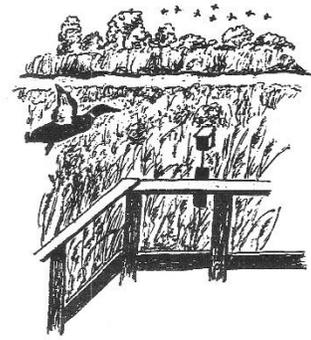
**Weather Note:** Date may change based on weather, please check Fyke emails or Facebook page for updates.

### March 22, 2019 — Monthly meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Polar Bears and Emperors: From One Extreme to the Other, Kevin Watson

The frozen polar regions of Planet Earth are home to two of its most iconic species: Polar Bears in the Arctic, and Emperor Penguins in the Antarctic. So familiar from movies, cartoons and commercials, these species are rarely seen in the wild by humans. In 2018 Birder and photographer Kevin Watson had the opportunity to travel both north and south, to watch and photograph Polar Bears and Emperors in their remote yet beautiful habitats. We'll explore two realms of ice and ocean, at opposite ends of the planet, and the remarkable creatures that live there.

## April 6, 2019 — Celery Farm Cleanup

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the end of Greenway for a few hours of active conservation. We hope you will join us to spruce up the preserve. Many hands make light work! Marsh Warden Mike Limatola is the Coordinator, [mike.limatola@gmail.com](mailto:mike.limatola@gmail.com). Rain date is April 7, 2019.



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## The 67th Ramsey Christmas Bird Count

By Rob and Lisa Ann Fanning

Mild temps and cloudy skies made for comfortable yet tough viewing conditions during the 67th Ramsey Christmas count (CBC), held on December 15, 2018. Most lakes/ponds were mostly frozen over from a recent cold snap keeping waterfowl species counts on the low side as well. On the plus side this year is a flight or irruption year for winter finches and a few of these special species were noted on the count.

29 intrepid souls made up of 8 teams tallied nearly 13 hours of counting our avian friends. Collectively, we counted 13638 individuals representing 80 species.



Some notable species/numbers found by the teams include 1 Common Loon, 2061 Common Merganser, 1 Pied-billed Grebe, 1 Eastern Phoebe, 77 Fish Crow (all-time high), 160 American Crow (lower than usual), 7 Common Ravens (increasing), 3 Merlin (all-time high), 3 Red-breasted Nuthatch, 10 Brown Creeper, 1 Winter Wren, 29 Eastern Bluebirds, 1 Hermit Thrush, 1 Fox Sparrow, 9 Rusty Blackbird, 11 Purple Finches, 6 Pine Siskin, and 1 Evening Grosbeak (Heard at the Allendale Celery Farm).

Teams battled fiercely and always for the traditional awards. Team E led by CooX2 once again walked away with the THE COVETED BLUE JAY AWARD with 141 tallied. The BEST TEAM TROPHY was a tie again - Team C (Fanning) and team D (Kantrowitz) shared the honors with 5 over par. Team D took the coveted trophy home, while Team C was awarded the John and Pat Brotherton Memorial Award. Team Fanning once again retained the HOUSE SPARROW AWARD - those cute little Weaver Finches stand up to be counted year after year for Team C!

Many THANKS to all those who participated, YOU are the ones that make this event a success year after year, tabulating valuable citizen science data while helping to keep a wonderful birding tradition going strong.



## Field and Feeder Notes By Judith Cinquina

*At one of my lonely wilderness camps in the month of March, a pair of Barred Owls came to the trees over my campfire and made night hideous with their grotesque love-making, banishing sleep during the evening hours. Their courting antics...were ludicrous in the extreme. Perched in rather low branches over the fire they nodded and bowed with half-spread wings, and wobbled and twisted their heads from side to side, meanwhile uttering the most weird and uncouth sounds imaginable. Many of them were given with the full power of their lungs,...while others were soft and cooing...sounds resembling maniacal laughter and others like mere chuckles were interspersed here and there between loud wha whas and hoo-hoo-aws.*

~From Edward H. Forbush (1927) in A. C. Bent's Life Histories of N. Am. Birds of Prey, 1961 Dover edition

A “threatened” species in NJ, the Barred Owl is an uncommon resident in Bergen County and a treat wherever it’s found. On January 15 at 8:00 a.m., Mark Kantrowitz observed a Barred Owl in the trees along his Hillsdale driveway. I’ve been writing this column for our newsletter since 2005, and a quick scan of previous columns came up with only four other reports of Barred Owls, one in Mahwah in 2005 and the rest in Stiles Thomas’ Allendale backyard in 2011, ‘12 and ‘14. Since this owl does not migrate and is very territorial, any found are most likely permanent residents. Mark wrote, “It was striking to have one fly from tree to tree on our property and perch for a considerable time in the open, in daylight no less.” Barred Owls do sometimes call or hunt during the day. Although they may use old Red-shouldered Hawk nests, they prefer to nest in cavities of large old trees, often in swamps or wet woods but sometimes in mature pine forests. Mark stated that the Pascack Brook is only a few blocks from his home. Perhaps the trees are old enough there to provide large cavities. Unfortunately, Great Horned Owls include Barred Owls on their dinner menu, which is a prime reason we don’t have many Barreds around. Like their Great Horned cousin, a Barred will eat anything it can catch, including birds, mammals, fish and frogs.



At 5:15 p.m. on January 10, Betty Mc Donnell received a call alerting her to a Great Horned calling in her Mahwah yard. “I looked out over my patio,” Betty wrote, “and there at the top of a tall Black Walnut tree was the owl. He looked like a cat with his erect ears. Then he was gone.” Like the Bald Eagle, Great Horneds begin nesting in January – February so their young are ready to fledge and learn to hunt when bird and mammal young are just fledging and are easy to catch. Gaby Schmitt, one of the few Raptor Trust volunteers from Bergen County, has returned rehabbed Great Horneds to their territories, and wrote that the goal is to return them within five miles of where they were originally found. She listed the hazards these owls encountered. Out of five that she released, two were caught in soccer netting and one in netting meant to protect koi from herons, one was probably hit by a vehicle, and one fell from its nest during severe weather. Doug Morel noted the only Screech Owl at Mahwah Green Acres (Mary Patrick Park), January 16. Both the Barred and Great Horned dine on Screeches. Screech Owls are often hit by cars and, if they can’t find an unoccupied cavity to roost in, can succumb to severe cold.

Some other exciting yard birds were discovered by Fykers. Stephanie Seymour was “shocked” to find a male Evening Grosbeak at her Ringwood feeders, November 14. That was yard bird #135 for Steph, and her “dream come true!” On the Ramsey Christmas Count two days later, Rob Fanning heard one over the Celery Farm (CF), which was a new Bergen County bird for Rob. However, the promise of Evening Grosbeaks at our local feeders this winter has yet to materialize. They seem to have settled northwest of us in Sullivan County, NY. Pine Siskins were a bit more cooperative, although sporadic. A group turned up at Barbara Dilger’s Waldwick feeders, November 16. One seemed to be a fledgling and was fed by another Siskin, Barbara reported. But according to Dawson, (2014) in *The Birds of N. America* (online), what Barbara witnessed was courtship feeding. It may occur between any members and sexes of the flock and helps maintain social bonds. The behavior varies from touching bills to prolonged feeding. Barbara also noticed the Siskins were “feisty” and not afraid to fight for their places at the feeders. Siskins also appeared in Upper Saddle River, Mahwah and Allendale yards, but the only report for 2019 came from Steph in Ringwood and was her first bird of the New Year.

Red-breasted Nuthatches also turned up in a few yards. Rick Weiman had one on November 11 in Oakland and Louise Riccobene noted another in Franklin Lakes, January 17. Rosemarie Widmer suspected she had a pair in Allendale, but it wasn’t until January that she confirmed two together at her feeder. At a mere 4.5 inches, they’re smaller than our chickadee and just a bit larger than a kinglet, so they’re easy to miss when they zoom in for sunflower seeds or suet and disappear in a blur. Their tin horn calls are endearing. Occasionally they nest in NJ, especially after an irruption year, and prefer conifers. Their nests are found consistently in Norway Spruce plantings in Sussex County and the Highlands, according to Boyle (*Birds of NJ* 2011).

A White-crowned Sparrow was a new bird for Betty McDonnell’s Mahwah yard. It joined her White-throats and Fox Sparrows on her patio under her feeders, November 18. Another yard first was a Merlin spotted by Brian Kenney in Hackensack, January 12. On the 3rd, a Merlin perched atop a tall spruce to survey the gardens at Skylands Manor in Ringwood and may have been one of the reasons I found few songbirds in the gardens that day. This northern breeder was also a first for me there, and I’ve birded those gardens since the late 70’s. They’re pushing south as a breeding bird. I suspect it won’t be long before Merlins are nesting here in NJ. A Northern Mockingbird was a new yard bird for Janet Tedesco in Oakland, January 18. I knew old timers who had to go down south to “life” a Mocker. This species didn’t reach Sussex County, NJ until 1958, according to Boyle (2011). Janet wrote that her Mocker fed on red berries on one of her bushes. According to Farnsworth, Londono, Martin, Derrickson and Breitwisch (2011) in *The Birds of N. America* (online), it was just such ornamental plantings in new suburban yards and the fact that Mockers were no longer captured for the pet trade or killed as agricultural pests that allowed the species to rebound and spread north.



Rob Fanning wrote that he was “lucky” to see a lingering Hudsonian Godwit, at DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst, November 2. One of his “all-time favs,” sporting a long bill that goes up to God, as one of my mentors used to say, the Hudsonian breeds on the tundra and migrates along our coast but is very rare inland. The day before, he bagged an Orange-crowned Warbler and three Red-headed Woodpeckers at Troy Meadows in Morris County. It’s good to hear Rob hasn’t lost his birding mojo. Doug Morel also found a Red-headed Woodpecker in Paramus, January 8. On the 15th he picked one Cackling Goose out of 300 Canadas in Westwood, and on the 12th he counted 34 Hooded Mergansers on open water in Mahwah at Halifax. Mahwah Green Acres produced 20 Hooded Mergansers for Simon Streatfeild, December 8 but only 4 remained by

January 17. On the 17th Simon also spotted two Catbirds there, but Boyle states that few survive the winter. And on November 16, he reported an E. Meadowlark at Green Acres, which is the only report for 2018 that I know of in our area. The eBird map showed none in Bergen County this year.

An uncommon visitor to the CF, a Common Goldeneye was dubbed the BOD or bird of the day by the Hour on the Tower crew, December 23. Goldeneyes, and yes, their eyes are golden, are more commonly found on reservoirs and large bodies of water. Jim Wright noted a few Rusty Blackbirds at the CF, November 2, and Barbara Dilger managed to photograph a Hermit Thrush there that same day. Two days later, Barbara found “numbers” of Rusty Blackbirds there. According to Boyle, Rusty Blackbirds have suffered a drastic decline in the last few decades. We’re lucky that the CF continues to attract them. By November 18, Charley West’s Tower Crew tallied just one, along with a single Purple Finch. Lorraine Norvinski’s posse found the only Rusties for the Ramsey Christmas Bird Count, December 16. Nine of them were in a small patch of wet woods in Mahwah. About the size of a Red-winged Blackbird but with no wingbars, a prominent white eye offset by a narrow black mask, and a rusty winter coat, Rusties hunt the muddy edges of swamps, lakes and rivers. Doug Morel reported two as late as January 9 in Westwood.

Barbara Dilger’s “little piece of land” near White’s Pond in Waldwick produced a large group of Eastern Bluebirds, October 31. She stated, they seemed to “enjoy” sitting on the Port-A-John and construction equipment. The land is destined to become suburban housing. A pair of Bluebirds was spotted by Jim Wright investigating nest boxes at the CF, December 4. If the House Sparrows and Tree Swallows allow, they’d make a nice addition to the CF’s breeding list. Don’t forget to keep your feeders full and clean and please let us know what you see, especially if it’s an Evening Grosbeak. 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 [judycinq@optonline.net](mailto:judycinq@optonline.net).

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**Mount Peter – 2018**  
**By Judith Cinquina**



Twenty-four days of bad weather shortened the 2018 Mount Peter Hawk Watch to 418 hours between September 1 and November 15, but produced a healthy 8,529 raptors, averaging 20.4 per hour. Highlights of the 74-day count included record Red-shouldered and Cooper’s Hawks and a daily record for the Red-shoulder and an encouraging increase in the once common American Kestrel. Results for the N. Harrier, however, remained depressing. Although the Rough-legged Hawk failed to show up for the eighth consecutive season, Golden Eagles and Goshawks sprinkled a bit of glitter on our 61st season.

September seemed a never-ending series of fog, drizzle, rain, heat and weak winds from the wrong direction, yet our 11 volunteer leaders persisted and ticked off 5,071 Broad-winged Hawks, most of them pepper specks at the edge of invisibility. Matt Zeitler drew the best day and counted 1,257 on the 22nd with a light NW wind. October, however, was kinder and graced us with a few record scores and rarities. The 213 Red-shouldered Hawks beat out our old record

of 165 from 2012 (90 adult, 21 immature and 102 unknown). Most moved through between October 19 and November 4 on strong NW winds. Just to be contrary, light S winds generated a new daily record of 28 Shoulders on October 26 for Denise Farrell. That wiped out the record 27 scored November 4, 2017 by Matt. This species has gone through low and high seasons for decades, but since 2012 has been on an upward swing. The 508 Red-tailed Hawks was an improvement over last season but a far cry from the record 905 scored in 2003. Nick Bolgiano wrote in the 2012 season's Hawk Migration Studies –Vol. 38, No. 2 that Red-tails in the Kittatinny Ridge corridor are “short-stopping” or not migrating as far south as their ancestors or not migrating at all. In that same area Christmas Bird Counts have seen an increase in Red-tails. According to Bolgiano, the same thing holds for the no-show Rough-legged Hawks.

The 1,469 Sharp-shinned Hawks was better than the 841 that graced the 2017 season, but remains part of a downward trend in the Northeast. Our only three-digit count was on October 12 with 173 on strong northwest winds. Their cousin the Cooper's Hawks has been increasing, evidenced by our new record of 176 that squelched the 165 tallied in 2012. This species hit triple digit tallies beginning in 1990 and has been increasing ever since all over the Northeast. The much rarer Goshawk made two appearances this season. Both Ajit Anthony and Will Test bagged immature Goshawks, Ajit on October 17 and Will on November 14, on brisk west and northwest winds. Both Gos provided close views, and Will, who endured below freezing temperatures and howling 20 m/h winds, stated that the sighting warmed him up a bit.

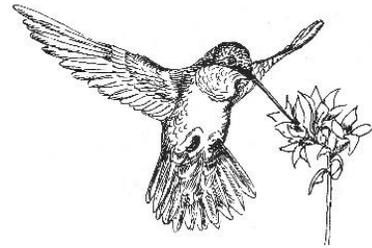
After three seasons of two-digit counts, the American Kestrel bounced back to a three-digit 159 (35 male, 27 female, 97 unknown). That's good news for this little falcon, although it can't approach the 592 totaled in 1981. Most moved through between October 12 and 24, a very late peak for this species. Denise garnered the best day with 41 on strong NW winds on the 12th, a day that produced many Kestrels all over the Northeast including 5,406 at Cape May. Mount Peter is not a falcon lookout, so the 15 Merlin, although a bit below average, were a treat, especially the three Tom Millard tallied October 30. Peregrines brought in our second-best score ever, with 23 noted. The record 26 was made just last season, so this species is on the up-swing after practically disappearing in the 1960's. Ajit Antony and Bill O'Keefe each scored three Peregrines on September 19 and 30 respectively.



After five mediocre seasons, the Osprey produced a bit of a bounce with 134 noted but the tally remains under our 10-year average. Bill O'Keefe nabbed the best count of 19, September 20 on weak NE winds. The elegant N. Harrier barely made it over our lookout with a mere 35 spotted this fall (3 male, 9 female, 8 immature and 15 unknown). Bald Eagles came in at an above-average 112 (58 adult, 51 immature and 3 unknown). We also had 58 Bald Eagle visitors who weren't counted and headed north. Sometimes a pair would entertain us, interacting and flirting and distracting us from counting real migrants. Others accompanied true migrants past the platform then headed back north. Matt Zeitler observed 10 on September 29 that weren't counted, five of them adults flying north together. Six Golden Eagles were shared by leaders this season: 2 adult, 4 immature. Rick Hansen reported a young Golden appeared over the lookout at 8:45 a.m. November 10, sat on the updraft along the west side and stooped into the valley and disappeared. The next day, a young Golden almost slipped by to the east, where trees block our view but was spotted at the last second by Jeanne Cimorelli and Tom Millard.

Turkey Vultures produced their 2<sup>nd</sup> best tally ever with 504 counted. Denise Farrell netted the record day with 88 on strong NW winds, October 12. Black Vultures muddled along with 79 tallied. Up to five local Ravens were with us almost daily, and Rick Hansen counted

seven migrating past the lookout November 10. A moderate 307 Monarch Butterflies were recorded, along with a mere 13 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. Once again, Denise had the big Canada Goose day of 1,884 on October 5. Only 5,081 were counted for the season. Matt had the only Brant with 250 on October 13, and he also scored the most Blue Jays on September 22 with 600 noted. The season produced 1,628. Between September 1 and October 24, we tallied 458 Double-crested Cormorants, including Ken Witkowski's 417 on September 24. Nine C. Loons were spotted this season heading towards Greenwood Lake. Other birds of interest included:



- September
- 1 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches (almost daily through 10/26) 1st Cape May warbler
  - 3 202 Tree, 11 Barn and 17 Rough-winged swallows, 1 Purple Martin
  - 4 Least Flycatcher, 1st Ruby-crowned Kinglet, 1st Prairie & Magnolia warblers
  - 8 Swainson's Thrush, 1st E. Towhee, 1st 2 Palm Warblers
  - 9 1st Black-throat Green & 1st Yellow-rumped warblers, Brown Thrasher (also 9/12)
  - 11 2 N. Parula, Black-throated Blue, Black & White, Chestnut-sided warblers
  - 14 10 Chipping Sparrows, 54 Am. Robins (309 between 9/14 & 10/22)
  - 15 18 Chimney Swifts, 1st Scarlet Tanager, Yellow throated Vireo, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher
  - 16 1st Purple Finch – last 10/28 with 55 counted 10/19
  - 17 Red-headed Woodpecker
  - 29 Blackpoll Warbler, Am. Redstart
- October
- 1 1st Golden-crowned Kinglet – 11 on 10/17
  - 5 1st Yellow-bellied Sapsucker - 7 more through 10/17
  - 14 1st Blue-headed Vireo, Hermit Thrush
  - 19 Field Sparrow
  - 26 1st Dark-eyed Junco

We can't thank our friends and visitors enough for their support, especially on high, blue days when even eagles were invisible to the naked eye or overcast days when the wind howled, and every migrant shot like an arrow past the watch. A special shout out goes to Bill Connolly, John and Liz Sherry and Rob Stone for their many hours of spotting and company, and a big welcome to new leader Jeanne Cimorelli. Our 61st count was enriched by all of you.

We are indebted to our clean-up crew Denise Farrell, Rick Hansen, Tom Millard and Gabriele Schmitt and to the Fyke Nature Association of Bergen County, NJ who supplied our insurance. Here's hoping that the NYDEC Region 3 Foresters can do something about the trees that block our view of low migrants to the SE of the platform before next season and that the pot-holed dirt track to our lot can be improved. We are indebted to Fyke for sponsoring our count and to all who supported our site on Hawkcount.org. We continue as the oldest, continually run, all-volunteer fall watch in the country.

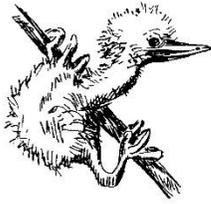
**11 YEAR SUMMARY OF AUTUMN HAWK COUNTS AT MOUNT PETER, N.Y.**

SPECIES	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Black Vulture	51	42	77	38	4	104	232	107	84	96	79
Turkey Vulture	142	177	189	221	112	121	570	292	337	320	504
Osprey	116	176	203	187	191	126	111	114	98	111	134
Bald Eagle	41	45	89	70	130	119	79	70	95	85	112
N. Harrier	42	36	64	41	47	51	46	28	35	26	35
Sharp-shinned Hawk	785	1,106	1,803	1,334	1,826	1,026	1,119	1,017	1,104	841	1,469
Cooper's Hawk	58	89	119	152	165	64	122	74	94	121	176
N. Goshawk	1	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	1	2
Red-shouldered Hawk	34	38	94	94	131	118	136	85	104	122	213
Broad-winged Hawk	10,548	4,505	8,531	7,417	6,073	7,611	5,685	11,256	5,894	6,874	5,071
Red-tailed Hawk	345	471	574	248	437	582	658	289	478	232	508
Rough-legged Hawk	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Golden Eagle	5	4	8	4	3	5	10	5	3	4	6
American Kestrel	69	183	207	153	232	112	139	75	52	83	159
Merlin	14	22	22	25	23	14	23	24	15	18	15
Peregrine Falcon	14	14	10	18	20	15	12	11	13	26	23
Unidentified Eagle	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	5	0
Unidentified Raptor	35	14	68	61	68	37	69	33	42	8	18
GRAND TOTAL	12,302	6,948	12,061	10,065	9,463	10,105	9,012	13,481	8,448	8,996	8,529
TOTAL HOURS	376	399	469	411	413	480	468	480	488	480	418
RAPTOR/HOUR	32.70	17.41	25.72	24.49	22.91	21.05	19.26	28.09	17.31	18.75	20.40

**MOUNT PETER FALL HAWKS: 2007-2017 10-YEAR AVERAGE**

	BV	TV	OS	BE	NH	SS	CH	NG	RS	BW	RT	RL	GE	AK	ML	PG	TOTAL	HRS	HWKS/HR
10-Year Avg.	84	248	143	82	42	1,196	106	1	96	7,439	431	0	5	131	20	15	10,088	446	22.77
Total 2018	79	504	134	112	35	1,469	176	2	213	5,071	508	0	6	159	15	23	8,529	418	20.40

**Welcome New Members**



Lisa Potash, Family Membership, Oakland  
Joseph Koscielny, Family Membership, Oakland  
Bruce A. Davis, Allendale  
David Slomin, Family Membership  
John Spreitzer, Ridgewood



**Fyke Board of Trustees:**

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Newsletter: Carol Flanagan  
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Publicity: Gabriele Schmitt  
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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 -- \$20.00; Family -- \$25.00. For further information, write to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, visit our website [www.fykenature.org](http://www.fykenature.org), or contact Mike Limatola, President, [mike.limatola@gmail.com](mailto:mike.limatola@gmail.com). The Newsletter is published four times a year and manuscripts and artwork are welcome. Editor: Carol Flanagan, [carolflana@aol.com](mailto:carolflana@aol.com). Production: Molly Gardener and Carol Flanagan.

**The deadline for the Summer 2019 issue is March 20, 2019.** Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to [carolflana@aol.com](mailto:carolflana@aol.com).

