


Fyke Nature Association Summer Newsletter

Vol. 65 — No. 2 — 2019
www.fykenature.org

Calendar of Events

Since mid-2015 Fyke's monthly speaker costs have been funded by a generous grant from the Winifred M. and George P. Pitkin Foundation.

April 20, 2019 — Earth Day Warbler Walk at the Celery Farm

Meet fellow Fyke Members at the end of Green Way at 8:00 a.m. to look for spring arrivals. Birders of all levels are welcome! Leaders: Gaby Schmitt and Mike Limatola. Register for this walk by e-mail to mike.limatola@gmail.com.

April 26, 2019 — Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building The Mystery Writers' Garden (with a nod to Agatha Christie), Edith Wallace



Are you willing to risk everything to eliminate an obnoxious neighbor, co-worker or relative? How? You can get instructions from mystery stories written by the master Agatha Christie or contemporary authors. I've selected plants that grow in northern New Jersey that may be used for their lethal potential. Beware at tea time as some of these plants may be included in your beverage or cake. Might you be the perpetrator or victim? For your sake, you'd be a fool not to attend this program!

May 4, 2019 — Stepping Up For The Celery Farm and Pollinators

To register your team or to sign up for a time slot, contact Gabriele Schmitt, gaby413@aol.com. To make a donation or to pledge a per-species amount, please see the pledge form on page 8.

Many of you know that Stepping Up is The Celery Farm's Big Day, as well as our fundraiser that will support the Celery Farm Pollinators this year. As a special bonus, this year's date will coincide with Global Big Day, <https://ebird.org/news/global-big-day-4-may-2019>. And also, Star Wars Day, "May The Fourth Be With You!", <https://www.starwars.com/may-the-4th>. Will there be a Millennium Falcon overhead? Or a Porg hidden along the trail?

Fyke teams will be birding the Celery Farm from dawn to dusk in two-hour shifts; you can sign up for as many shifts as you'd like. As citizen-scientists, we are conducting an inventory of all the bird species seen that day.

**May the Fourth
be with you!**



Pledges this year will support the Celery Farm and Pollinators. Funds raised will be used to enhance the environment at Celery Farm for:

1. Butterflies and moths - We have a lovely Butterfly Garden that can always use some more plants, mulch, tools, etc. Maybe we could plant more Mountain Mint at Green Way as it seems to attract both butterflies and bees.
2. Birds - Efforts to control invasive plant species are ongoing. Success can be as simple as eliminating Multiflora roses to make way for Swamp roses, whose rose hips are a more desirable food source for birds and whose flowers are butterfly and bee magnets. Cutting invasive vines keeps them from strangling trees and shrubs.
3. Bees - We've talked about supporting bees, we would plant flowers that provide nectar for the bees.
4. Bats - We will be installing bat houses at the Celery Farm after consultation with New Jersey's Batman, Joe D'Angeli, to see where to place our existing bat boxes.

**May 17, 2019 — Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building
Winter Birding Along South Florida's Gulf Coast, Tom Mitchell and Sharon Ayling**

For the past five winters, Fyke members Tom Mitchell and Sharon Ayling have migrated to south Florida's Gulf Coast to enjoy the subtropical climate and the spectacular abundance of wintering and local birds. They will narrate a slideshow of Tom's photos taken at some of the region's most rewarding birding spots across a variety of subtropical habitats from Tampa Bay south to the Everglades.

June 1, 2019 — Celery Farm Bird Walk

This walk is for nature-lovers and birders of all levels. We'll look for butterflies, bugs, weird plants and our feathered friends. Meet at 8:00 a.m. at Greenway. Wear long pants and socks; bring water and bug spray! Leader: TBA.

July 20, 2019 - Our Tom Burr Memorial Butterfly Walk at the Celery Farm

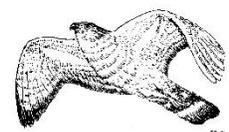
Our annual Celery Farm Butterfly Walk is held in memory of Tom Burr, the late Fyke member, naturalist, photographer, and friend. Meet at the end of Green Way at 10:30 a.m. for a 90-minute stroll. Dress for bright sun. Bring water and sunscreen. Rain cancels this walk. Leaders: Deedee Burnside and Fred Weber.

September 1, 2019 — Mt. Peter Hawk Watch begins

Fyke members are invited to help with the count or just to visit and give us your support. More details in the next newsletter. The watch begins September 1, 2019 and continues daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. until November 15. Contact Judy Cinquina at judycinq@optonline.net to volunteer or for more information.

August 31, 2019 – Mt. Peter Clean-Up

Our annual Clean-Up is scheduled for Saturday, August 31, 2019 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Rain date is Sunday September 1, 2019. Contact Judy Cinquina at judycinq@optonline.net to volunteer or for more information.



2020 Celery Farm Calendar

Photos taken at the Celery Farm by Fyke members are being accepted now for the 2020 Celery Farm calendar. There is a limit of 10 photos per person. The photos should be landscape format. Non-cropped photos work best with the software used for the calendar.

Please send your photos as an .jpeg email attachment to carolflana@aol.com by July 15, 2019. Thank you in advance for your support of Fyke Nature Association!

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### Field and Feeder Notes By Judith Cinquina

*Leonhard Boldner, the fisher and fowler of Strassburg, writing in 1653, thus aptly summarizes the characteristics of the Goosander: "The large sea-mew is also a kind of duck and bigger by a half than the common wild duck; together with the feathers it weighs four pounds, but as meat it is not as good as the wild duck. This sea-mew feeds on fishes and is constantly diving under water. It can seize a fish and eat it, even if it weighs half a pound, for the bill is narrow and the teeth on it are like a saw, with a crooked point or hook in front, with which it can lift and seize fish very well indeed.*

~ Phillips, John C, A Natural History of the Ducks, Vol III, 1922-1926

The Common Merganser, known as a Goosander in Europe, breeds across the entire northern hemisphere. It gets its European name from its long-necked, goose-like shape in flight.



Large rafts of mergansers are not unusual during the winter on our lakes and reservoirs. Brian Kenney counted 60 at Oradell Reservoir, March 1. They also appear on smaller lakes and ponds. Barbara Dilger photographed two females on White's Pond in Wyckoff, March 10. One was an adult, the second was a juvenile with a paler eye and bill and a white smudge above her gape line. She probably did not hatch locally.

The first confirmed breeding record in this state was along the Delaware River, Sussex County in 1973. Boyle in his Birds of NJ, 2011, considers the Common Merganser "an increasing summer resident." It has expanded further east since then, but it hasn't yet been confirmed breeding on the Ramapo River. Its expansion can be attributed to our robust economy, support of wildlife research and our will to use our resources to clean up our environment. According to Phillips, back in the early 1920's, the Goosander (Common Merganser) nested "in many sections of Maine, northern New Hampshire and northern Vermont...as well as parts of northern New York...There is no doubt," he continues, "that this species once nested much further south on rapid rivers...but many of our eastern streams were rendered almost unfit for fish a very long time ago owing to factories." We've come a long way since the 1920's.

Barbara photographed another diver at White's Pond, February 15, a male Common Goldeneye. She said it was mixed in with some Ring-necked Ducks. "He was on the other side of the pond, so I drove over there to see if I could get some closer shots," she wrote, but of course the duck crossed to the other side. She drove back and forth a couple of times, "but was outsmarted each time." Phillips describes the Goldeneye as "shy, hardy, and for the most part distrustful of smaller waters." Phillips was right. The Goldeneye was gone from that small pond the next day. Called a "whistler" because of the loud humming or whistling noise made by its narrow-webbed last two primary feathers, this species, like the Common Merganser, nests in

tree hollows. The male is black and white, just like the Ring-necked Duck, but it has a white moon between its golden eye and dark bill, while the Ring-neck male has a white finger at his shoulder and two white bands around his blue bill. Ring-necks are often found in north Jersey in winter as long as the water stays open. Doug Morel counted 28 at Mahwah Green Acres (Mary Patrick Park) February 16, and 72 there on March 14. Like the Common Merganser and Goldeneye, Ring-necks are divers but feed primarily on submerged vegetation, while the other two prefer fish and mollusks. Phillips declared, the Ring-necked Duck “is one of the best of the diving ducks for the table.”

Another reward for cleaning up our environment was the sixteen Bald Eagle sightings reported between late January and middle March. Jim Wright noted the first one on the ice at the Celery Farm (CF), February 19. The last was an immature at Mahwah Green Acres, March 17. I was observing a female Common Merganser there that had just surfaced with a gold carp in her bill, when suddenly the eagle’s six-and-a-half-foot wingspread startled me and blocked my view. The eagle made a pass at the duck, obviously hoping she’d drop the fish. Instead, the merganser dove and consumed her prey underwater. Other rewards we’ve received include the Peregrine Brian Kenney sighted at Overpeck County Park in Ridgefield, February 28 and the Red-shouldered Hawk that visited Rosemarie Widmer’s Allendale yard also at the end of February. Both reports would have been rare events seventy years ago.



At least one of the two Catbirds that Simon Streatfeild found at Mahwah Green Acres, January 17, is still with us. Boyle states in his *Birds of NJ* (2011) that Catbirds rarely survive the winter, but Brian Kenney discovered at least one Catbird still there March 3, in spite of the relentless freezing temperatures in February and March. In addition to a variety of insects and spiders, Catbirds do eat berries, including sumac, Virginia creeper, and poison ivy that are available during the winter. Brain also reported an E. Towhee there, January 30. Although rare in winter, Boyle states the Towhee is increasing as a winter resident, especially in southern NJ.

Brown Creepers resemble a piece of living bark as they circle round and round the bole of a tree and will overwinter with us. Simon Streatfeild found the first one in Mahwah Green Acres, February 2. Others were spotted February 26 - March 8 in Mahwah, Waldwick and Upper Saddle River. Spring migrants won’t pass through our area until April. At least five Winter Wrens turned up this winter. The first was found by Doug Morel at Mahwah Green Acres, January 12. Three days later, Jim Wright reported one at the CF. Another explored fallen logs in a swampy area of the Bog Garden at Skylands Botanical Garden in Ringwood, January 29, precisely where you’d expect to find one. Potash Lake in Oakland produced the fourth one noted by Brian Kenney, February 15, and Doug found yet another at Halifax, the next day. Sometimes a number of Winter Wrens will roost together in very cold weather, but our area lacks enough overwintering wren bodies to provide that comfort.



Although Mark Kantrowitz reported a Fox Sparrow, February 2, it wasn’t until mid-March that a real spring migrant showed up in his Hillsdale yard. At the same time, they appeared in Upper Saddle River, Allendale and Loren Anderson’s Oakland yard. Loren stated it was a nice surprise, and I’d like to add, a welcome one. They mean spring is on its way, and so do the eight Tree Swallows spotted by Lisa Potash over Mahwah Green Acres, March 14. Three days later, there were at least four dozen performing a silent ballet over the water there.



Mark discovered a Great Horned Owl in his Hillsdale yard, February 15. It was flushed by Crows, who consider the owl their mortal enemy. Poet Mary Oliver captured their hatred best in her poem "In the Pinewoods": "How the crows dream of you, caught at last in their black beaks." Crows will come in from all over to harass a Great Horned Owl. Sometimes their ruckus over and around the owl will last all day. Screech Owls get the same treatment from Jays and Chickadees. Doug Morel and Brian Kenney discovered a Screech at Mahwah Green Acres, February 2 sitting in the opening of his tree cavity roost.

While we're waiting for the onslaught of spring migration, we can dig out our hummingbird feeders and prepare them for the Ruby-throat's arrival in mid to late April. The spring migration is very brief compared to fall's leisurely movement, so get out there as often as you can. And don't forget to share your sightings with the rest of us. 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 [judyqing@optonline.net](mailto:judyqing@optonline.net).



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FAKE NEWS (?)

By COOx2 (aka Charley West) - March 2019

Having spent the morning working on my tax returns my mood was a foul one, so after lunch I determined to change it into a fowl one and headed to Ringwood State Park where the only signs of Spring were the announcements of the opening of trout season.

As the road into the Park nears the picnic area it makes a 90-degree right turn. At that point, on my left, I eye-balled a shape that appeared bins-worthy - - it then became a Robin, unmoving, and in the classic head-cocked-to-the-side pose. In the same view field was a copy-cat fellow traveler, and as I continued to scan the ground, I counted 15 different Robins scattered about in a misshapen circle some 50 feet in diameter. ALL were "frozen" and immobile in their respective poses.

I assumed a "predator alert" had been sounded (The News), so I began to time their time-out while simultaneously scanning, without success, for a possible enemy (The Fake). After 4 minutes the tableau remained unchanged - and after 5 minutes - and after 6 minutes; still nary a feather or body movement. It was as if I was looking at a photograph! Sometime about the 7th minute, 2 or 3 of the birds on the north side of the "circle" broke their locus; perhaps 30 seconds later, birds at the "equator" began to move, and at the 8-minute mark the remainder became animated. There was never a unified flush - they just began to feed in situ.



Then I pondered: "How long had they been frozen before I started timing them?", "What's it like to be a prey species?", "Do they get used to it as a never-ending routine?", "Does a false alarm lead to reduced awareness or a slower response?"

I guess Tarzan had it right when, after vine-swinging back to his lair, he asked Jane to fix him his 3rd martini and offered - "It's a Jungle out there!"

THESTLE'S THISTLE

By John Moffet

(Note from Judith Cinquina: John Moffet lived in a trailer in Mahwah. Around the 1960's he discovered nature and became an incurable birder. He took volumes of field notes, hiked a lot in the Ramapos with just his cane, and joined nature organizations like Fyke, Ridge-wood and New Jersey Audubons, and Greenbrook Sanctuary. His friends remember him as a character, a staunch Tory, and a prolific story teller. John died in 1983 at the age of 75. Below is a charming letter he wrote to a friend.)

The famous thistle was first observed when I was cleaning up the "garden" (four by six feet) in front of my trailer. The basal leaves were impressive. A short time later, at two feet, it was such a sturdy plant, I decided to let it grow to see if the finches would be interested. I also wondered what species of thistle it was. I was torn between Field Thistle and Pasture Thistle. However, by the time it reached six feet and still was growing, I was thoroughly confused. So I called in our mutual friend Deedee Williamson (Burnside). Her awe and enthusiasm were gratifying. She in turn called in Thalia Sudnik of Fyke Nature Association to admire it. From then on the thistle had quite a fan club. At seven feet it finally brought forth one flower, and Deedee's excitement knew no bounds. It still lacked identification, so I decided to name it myself. As you know, Deedee's first name is Cecil. I decided to call it Cecil's thistle. However, at that time my dentures were a little loose, and it came out "Thestle's thistle" with a slight spray. So Thestle's thistle it remained.

When it reached nine or ten feet, it burst into profuse bloom. And now such "alarum and excursions!" The Goldfinches were the first to arrive. I discovered that they do not wait for the pods to burst, they just rip the hell out of them and then get busy on the seed. Besides the Goldfinches, the House Finches were also constant visitors. Butterflies moved in: swallowtail, Mourning Cloak and Fritillaries among the many. The bees were ecstatic. The Bumblebees got so much pollen each time that before leaving they waddled. There were also two kinds of Honey Bees and several others I am not familiar with. Oh yes, and I must not forget Mr. McNasty, the Yellow Jacket.



Then "havoc struck" in the person of Hurricane Belle. She flicked her tail in passing, and Thestle's thistle went down. It was partly snapped off. I tied it up as best I could, but it began to die and all the seed pods started to burst and blow all over, madly pursued by the Goldfinches. At the slightest breeze the area looked like a miniature snowstorm. Then a neighbor two trailers from me, who prides herself on being an amateur botanist, complained bitterly. She said our "lawns" would be all thistles next year. When you live as close to your neighbors as we do in a trailer park, quarreling is unthinkable. So Ralph Worfeld, from the management, and I loaded the "body" into his truck (We have the scars to prove it!) and took it out to the dump. Ralph told me that for weeks after, whenever he backed into the dump with a load, flocks of birds flew out of the pile.

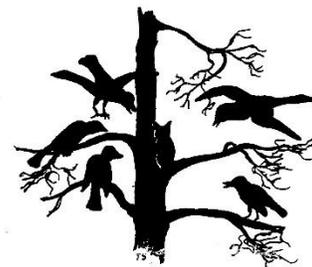
I was sitting on my "chair of state" one morning sometime later, thinking sadly of the ignominious end of Thestle's thistle, and a great light dawned. (It often does at these times.) You see, here in the ranch every two trailers share one septic tank and leaching field. So it was just a Field Thistle gone "ape" from high living. Its size and fame could only be attributed to my immediate neighbor and myself.

P.S. The next spring I found that the neighbor who complained was right. She had a lawn full of thistles. Picture my villainous laugh at this point.

Editor's note: I was intrigued by Judy's quote in her field and feeder article, so looked up the full poem:

IN THE PINEWOODS, CROWS AND OWL
By Mary Oliver, from *American Primitive*, 1983

Great bumble. Sleek
slicer. How the crows
dream of you, caught at last
in their black beaks. Dream of you
leaking your life away. Your wings
crumbling like old bark. Feathers
falling from your breast like leaves,
and your eyes two bolts
of lightning gone to sleep.
Eight of them
fly over the pinewoods looking down
into the branches. they know you are
there somewhere, fat and drowsy
from your night of rabbits and rats. Once
this month you caught a crow. Scraps of him
flew far and wide, the news
rang all day through the woods. The cold
river of their hatred roils
day and night: you are their dream, their waking,
their quarry, their demon. You
are the pine god who never speaks but holds
the keys to everything while they fly
morning after morning against the shut doors. You
will have a slow life, and eat them, one by one.
They know it. They hate you. Still
when one of them spies you out, all stream
straight toward violence and confrontation.
As though it helped to see the living proof.
The bone-crushing prince of the dark days, gloomy
at the interruption of his rest. Hissing
and snapping, grabbing about him, dreadful
as death's drum; mournful, unalterable fact.



From the Editor to all Fyke Members:

Please send items you think would be of interest to our group. News, features, articles on wildlife observation, conservation issues, book reviews, field notes, humorous first-person bird/nature related stories. All submissions will be gratefully appreciated!



Support Fyke!

If you shop on Amazon please go through the Fyke website. Go to www.fykenature.org, click on the shop link on the right side of the screen, and then click on the Amazon logo. This is for all items sold on Amazon, not just books.

The affiliate program contributes 1% to 10% to Fyke depending on the items purchased. This does not increase the cost of your purchase. Fyke is on the Smile program, but the Smile program only contributes 0.5% to Fyke.

(Fyke does not endorse any particular online shopping site.)



Stepping Up For The Celery Farm Pledge Form – 2019



There are three ways to send your pledge:

- Bring your pledge form to the April meeting.
- By mail to Fyke Nature Association, Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446
- By e-mail to Kurt Muenz, elkumu@aceweb.com

Yes, I want to support Stepping Up by making a pledge per bird species seen. I understand that 60 to 80 species may be recorded, however, the total could be higher if conditions are ideal.

My pledge is:

___\$1/species ___\$.75/species ___\$.50/species ___\$.25/species \$___/species

Name:

Address:

Phone:

E-mail:

You will be notified of your pledge total soon after the event. Checks should be made out to Fyke Nature Association.

“To stand at the edge of the sea, to sense the ebb and flow of the tides, to feel the breath of a mist moving over a great salt marsh, to watch the flight of shore birds that have swept up and down the surf lines of the continents for untold thousands of years, to see the running of the old eels and the young shad to the sea, is to have knowledge of things that are as nearly eternal as any earthly life can be.”

~Rachel Carson

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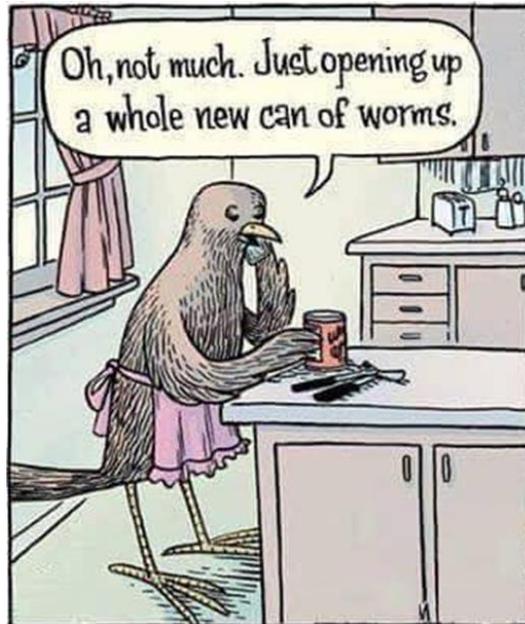
**Birder's Smiles**



**The Duck**

Behold the duck.  
It does not cluck.  
A cluck it lacks.  
It quacks.  
It is specially fond  
Of a puddle or pond.  
When it dines or sups,  
It bottoms ups.

Ogden Nash



**Welcome New Members**



Martin A. Prince, Family Membership, Woodcliff Lake  
Linda Wasserman, Northvale



**Fyke Board of Trustees:**

|                          |                  |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| President:               | Mike Limatola    |
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| Second Vice President:   | Penny Whitlock   |
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**Chairpersons:**

|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| Celery Farm:  | Stiles Thomas    |
|               | Mike Limatola    |
|               | Gabriele Schmitt |
|               | Jim Wright       |
| Conservation: | Gabriele Schmitt |
| Hawk Watch:   | Judith Cinquina  |
| Land Trust:   | Hugh Carola      |
| Newsletter:   | Carol Flanagan   |
| Programs:     | Penny Whitlock   |
| Publicity:    | Gabriele Schmitt |
| Webmaster:    | Kevin Watson     |



**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).

**The deadline for the Fall 2019 issue is August 21, 2019.**  
Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to [carolflana@aol.com](mailto:carolflana@aol.com).

