


Fyke Nature Association Fall Newsletter

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www.fykenature.org

Dues notice:

Fyke dues for September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020 is due now, \$25 for a family and \$20 for an individual. You can pay online at www.fykenature.org, or by check made out to Fyke Nature Association, and mailed to Fyke Nature Association, Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446.

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.

December 14, 2019 – Save the date for the Ramsey Christmas Bird Count! Lisa Fanning

September to November – State Line Hawk Watch.

Meet at the State Line lookout in Alpine. This site has easy access and park facilities. Here is a chance to look down at migrating hawks. From September through early November, volunteer observers record the migration of raptors from the lookout point at State Line Lookout, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., volunteer availability and weather conditions permitting.



Photo by Jim Wright

September 1 to November 15, 2019 – Mount Peter Hawk Watch, Judith Cinquina

Get under the Atlantic Flyway this fall and witness the southbound spectacle of raptors and songbirds. Mount Peter has reserved a spot just for you with views of the Warwick Valley clear out to the Kittatinny Mountains and access to the best homemade ice cream in the Northeast. Best times: mid-September for Broad-wings, Osprey and Bald Eagles; or mid-October – November for Red-tails and Red-shoulders and, with luck, a Golden Eagle. The watch is located above the Creamery at the top of 17A between Greenwood Lake and Warwick, NY.

September 14 and 15 2019 -- Fyke Weekend at Mount Peter

Come one or both days and join the regulars at the lookout. We hope to catch a big Broad-winged flight. Registration not required.

September 27, 2019 – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Owls, Giselle Smisko

Mysterious and fascinating, owls have intrigued people for centuries. Myths abound. Learn details of the owls' lives and their amazing adaptations. The talk will feature live owls from the Avian Wildlife Center. The individual stories for these birds will highlight some of the struggles owls have in our world and reveal ways that people can help them.

October 6, 2019 – Hawks Over the Hudson, 12:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Fyke will be represented at “Hawks Over the Hudson” at the State Line Lookout, Palisades Interstate Park in Alpine, New Jersey, rain or shine. The program features live birds of prey presented by the Delaware Valley Raptor Center at 1 and 2:30 p.m. Between the programs, visitors can chat with the presenters, and to enjoy activities and exhibits presented by some of the member organizations of the Nature Program Cooperative. The program is free and open to all, with no advance registration required to attend. Website for this event is <http://natureprogram.org/hawksOverHudson.html>.

October 13, 2019 (Sunday) - The Big Sit! at the Celery Farm

The Big Sit! is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event. Our team, The Celery Stalkers, sits in a circle 17 feet in diameter for 24 hours counting all the bird species we see or hear. The center of our circle is the Pirie-Mayhood Tower. To sign up for a 2-hour team contact Carol Flanagan, carolflana@aol.com.



October 20, 2019 (Sunday) - Field Trip: Ducks at Dusk

Meet at the Celery Farm Warden’s Watch at 5:30 p.m. To register contact Mike Limatola, mike.limatola@gmail.com.

October 25, 2019 - Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Who’s There? Ed Kanze

Our speaker will be Ed Kanze, Swarovski Optik/Bird Watcher's Digest 2017 "Birder of the Year". Ed, a highly accomplished naturalist, Adirondack guide, author and photographer, will tell us of an Adirondack biological survey he and his family have conducted since 2000, covering birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, wildflowers, trees and more.

November 2, 2019 - Field Trip: Sunrise Mountain Hawk Watch

Meet on site 10 a.m. To register contact Mike Limatola, mike.limatola@gmail.com.

December 6, 2019 - Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Members Night, Kurt Muenz, elkumu@aceweb.com.

Please come and enjoy an evening of short presentations by Fyke Members or better yet, be a presenter and share your own photos, prints, collections, stories, etc. Information on submitting digital presentations will be in the winter Fyke newsletter.

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**Welcome New Members**



Pam Dahlen and Mike Schoeffler, Family Membership, Highland Park  
Dr. Alan Kaplan, Wanaque  
Nancy Motto, Ramsey  
Carol Peterson, Family Membership, Oakland  
Sarwinder and Sheena Singh, Franklin Lakes  
Robert Williams, Fair Lawn

## Stepping Up Results — May The Fourth Be With You! By Gabriele Schmitt

Despite dire forecasts and not the best of conditions, an intrepid band of birders walked the paths of the Celery Farm from 6:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on May 4, 2019. I want to thank those of you who did your fair weather dance and/or ritual so that we could tally our 80 species. \$2089.00 was raised for the Celery Farm and our pollinators!



### Participants:

John Bird  
Charley West  
Brian Kenney  
Enid Hayflick  
Kevin Watson  
Rochana Muenthongchin

Gabriele Schmitt  
Doug Morel  
Mike Limatola  
Loren Anderson  
Alice Leurck  
Karen Heifetz

Julie McCall  
Fiona Keating  
Philip Keating  
Fred Webber  
Jim Wright  
Penny Whitlock and guests

### List of Species Seen:

Canada Goose  
Wood Duck  
American Wigeon  
Blue-winged Teal  
Mallard  
Wild Turkey  
Mourning Dove  
Chimney Swift  
Ruby-throated Hummingbird  
Spotted Sandpiper  
Solitary Sandpiper  
Greater Yellowlegs  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Great Blue Heron  
Great Egret  
Green Heron  
Turkey Vulture  
Osprey  
Cooper's Hawk  
Red-shouldered Hawk  
Red-tailed Hawk  
Belted Kingfisher  
Red-bellied Woodpecker  
Downy Woodpecker  
Hairy Woodpecker  
Northern Flicker  
Great Crested Flycatcher

Eastern Kingbird  
Least Flycatcher  
Warbling Vireo  
Red-eyed Vireo  
Blue-headed Vireo  
Blue Jay  
American Crow  
Fish Crow  
Common Raven  
Northern Rough-wing Swallow  
Tree Swallow  
Barn Swallow  
Black-capped Chickadee  
Tufted Titmouse  
White-breasted Nuthatch  
House Wren  
Carolina Wren  
Ruby-crowned Kinglet  
Blue-grey Gnatcatcher  
Veery  
Wood Thrush  
Hermit Thrush  
American Robin  
Gray Catbird  
European Starling  
House Finch  
Purple Finch

American Goldfinch  
Chipping Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow  
Song Sparrow  
Swamp Sparrow  
Eastern Towhee  
Baltimore Oriole  
Red-winged Blackbird  
Brown-headed Cowbird  
Common Grackle  
Ovenbird  
Northern Waterthrush  
Blue-winged Warbler  
Black and White Warbler  
Common Yellowthroat  
American Redstart  
Northern Parula  
Palm Warbler  
Magnolia Warbler  
Yellow Warbler  
Black-throated Blue Warbler  
Yellow-rumped Warbler  
Black-throated Green Warbler  
Scarlet Tanager  
Northern Cardinal  
House Sparrow

### Thank you to all who donated to Stepping Up!:

John Bird  
Mimi Brauch  
Sara & Mike Buckley  
Deedee Burnside  
Monica Cardoza  
Judy Cinquina  
Phil Dahlen  
Lisa & Rob Fanning  
Sandeef Faust  
Carol Flanagan  
Molly Gardener

Enid Hayflick  
Marriane Herrmann  
Brian Kenney  
Darlene Lembo  
Alice Leurck  
Larry Levine  
Dorothy Lux  
Sharon Ayling & Tom Mitchell  
Doug Morel  
Rochana Muenthongchin  
Kurt Muenz

Ravi Potluri  
Dora & Hans Sammer  
Gabriele Schmitt  
Diane Van Kempen  
Kevin Watson  
Fred Weber  
Charley West  
Penny & Dick Whitlock  
John Workman  
Pat Finn & Jim Wright

**“There Are Birds”**  
**By Carol Flanagan**

Fyke member Stephanie Seymour, a passionate birder and singer/songwriter extraordinaire, has released her new CD “There Are Birds.” Stephanie states, “There Are Birds’ is an album about birds, nature, the passage of time, and my relationship with these things and more. It’s my story told from a bird’s perspective and the birds’ stories revealed through my worldview.” The songs are all named after birds, except for the final song called “Migration Is Over.” Each song is quite different from the next, but they are mostly rock/pop tunes with layered harmonies and strong melodies.



Everyone, especially birders, will enjoy the songs on this CD. The song about Emily ("House Sparrow") is my favorite. I could feel Stephanie’s enthusiasm and anticipation of our spring arrivals in "Veery." Of course, I had a few chuckles listening to "Migration is Over." For more information on Stephanie, her CD, and how to order your own copy of the CD or a digital download, go to: <http://www.therearebirds.com/>

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Field and Feeder Notes
By Judith Cinquina

I was able to record both singing Mourning Warblers at Halifax Road this past Sunday. The calls were analyzed by a professor studying Mourning calls at Saint Anselm College in Manchester, NH. One bird, louder and frequently visible was singing the Eastern Regiolect. The other singer, a true skulker was singing the Newfoundland Regiolect. Both birds heading different places but finding Halifax Road a good place to refuel.*

*Regiolect: a dialect spoken in a particular geographical region.

Posted by David Bernstein on the GroupMe text alert

A Mourning Warbler is a notorious skulker, hiding deep inside a low impenetrable tangle, teasing you with glimpses of its deep yellow underparts, gray hood or olive back while you dance around trying to see enough to eliminate similar species like the Connecticut or a rare MacGillivray’s. A late migrant and uncommon, one was detected by Brian Kenney at Halifax in Mahwah, May 19. Ten days later, Doug Morel reported two there around the parking area. A life bird for Lisa Potash, she managed to see and/or hear both between May 27 and 30. It sings a loud, garbled “torry-torry-torry-chew” song that gives it away, but it has been known to sing once and go silent and leave you frozen, waiting for another clue that never comes as it forages undetected on or near the ground .



Although most breed across Canada, Mournings nest as close as the Poconos, Catskills and Adirondacks and tend to occupy new clearings as soon as they’re available. They benefit from human disturbed forested landscapes and prefer cut-over fields covered with low shrubs. According to Birds of NJ, Walsh etc., 1999, a singing male established a territory along a powerline cut in the Pequannock Watershed in 1996 and sang “uncharacteristically from exposed perches” from June 2 to 20 but never attracted a mate. That was the only recorded nesting attempt in our state. Lisa sent along David Bernstein’s interesting post about the origins of both Halifax birds. They may have traveled the same route from wintering grounds in Central or South America, hugging the eastern coast of Central American

and Mexico and perhaps following the Appalachian Range north. Research on song variation has shown that there is a “macrogeographic pattern of four regiolects” across its breeding range, according to Mourning Warbler, Pitocchelli, 2019, Birds of North America online. Halifax provided refuge for two of the four regiolect types, one heading to Newfoundland and the other heading to southern Canada or somewhere along the Great Lakes or Appalachian Mountains. As you read this, Mournings are beginning to turn south the same way they came, avoiding that long water crossing over the Gulf of Mexico.

From May 9 until June 23, a Prothonotary Warbler male seemed to be on territory at Mahwah Green Acres (Mary Patrick Park). Unfortunately, it never attracted a mate. On May 16, Simon Streatfield reported the bird “was singing loudly from a branch 10 feet” from his nose. He viewed it “splendidly in the sun for five minutes.” It is much more common in south Jersey where it shines like a golden light in the dismal swamps and wet woods where it nests in tree cavities. The Prothonotary was last seen by Simon on June 23. A Pine Warbler began the spring migration warbler parade, March 25 in Upper Saddle River, and a Palm was added on the 31st by the Hour on the Tower crew at the Celery Farm (CF), according to Charles West. Halifax produced a movement of at least 22 Palms, April 12. Mid-April is the peak of their spring migration according to Boyle in his *The Birds of NJ*. A Louisiana Waterthrush, another early migrant, turned up at the CF, April 8, and Tom Mitchell posted a video of it hunting with its tail end performing a U-shaped bounce as it moved along the muddy edge of the Allendale Brook. The first Northern Waterthrush didn’t turn up until April 28 but put on a nice show right beneath the Pirie Platform for the Hour on the Tower gang. Its tail bouncing is more a straight up and down affair, like that of a Phoebe.

A “very vocal and active” Marsh Wren entertained Mike Limatola and Sue Dougherty on an evening walk at the CF, April 30, but there was no confirmation that it stayed to nest as this species has done in years past. On May 25, Jim Wright spotted “at least five” Nighthawks over the Warden’s Watch at the CF. Sadly, that was the sole sighting of this beleaguered species reported by any Fyke member. Nighthawks should be heading south in late August or early September, so look up. Maybe you’ll be lucky. Another beleaguered species was the Rusty Blackbird photographed at Halifax by Loren Anderson. A life bird for Loren, she first noted a male in a very wet woods, May 1, and went back May 2 to take photos and discovered two there. With their dark glossy plumage and conspicuous pale iris, they could be mistaken for a Common Grackle but for their obvious smaller size and slimmer blackbird shape. Also, May 1, a hungry female Merlin was lured off her migrant highway into Halifax airspace by flocks of swallows and swifts. She grabbed a Chimney Swift in mid-air and seemed to struggle a bit to lug the bird, approximately one-sixth her own weight, to a high, dead stub. She held the swift head up and breast forward and began to pluck its feathers. Feathers floated through the air for a while, and then the Merlin began to consume the head.

Common Mergansers seem to be nesting somewhere in the Fyke area, quite possibly along the Ramapo River. Doug Morel counted 10 chicks following a female at Mahwah Green Acres, May 27. Four days later he noted 14 with another female at Halifax. Both preserves are adjacent to the Ramapo. Further afield, Rob Fanning enjoyed a Red-necked Phalarope at DeKorte Park in the Meadowlands, May 23. Originally spotted by Fred Weber, this phalarope is expected in large flocks at sea this time of year but is a rare spring migrant on shore. On July 20, Brian Kenney counted 14 Least Terns perched on a railing with Forster’s Tern at DeKorte. Least Terns are on NJ’s Endangered Species list. He also saw the White Pelican that spent the summer at DeKorte for the third summer in a row. It was still present, August 17 with an added bonus of a young Tri-colored Heron, a rare and declining species that he found near the NJ Turnpike.



A Screech Owl was enjoyed by a number of Fyke members into April. Tom Mitchell reported it April 6 but wondered if his report was bad birding etiquette. Owl locations are usually kept secret to protect them from disturbance, but Kevin Watson assured him that in this case, it was fine. Kevin stated that the owl had been present all winter and that “a few hundred people” probably walked by it, “some with dogs, a few on horseback.” Its roost was created by a Pileated Woodpecker, Kevin added, and the woodpecker had come back and chiseled around the cavity opening. What the owl did when the Pileated was working, Kevin didn’t know.

A Hermit Thrush visited Tom Nicastri’s and Valerie Moore’s Midland Park yard, April 16, and the first Rose-breasted Grosbeak report came from Janet Tedesco in Oakland, April 23. An uncommon CF bird, a Brown Thrasher was spotted there by Doug Morel April 14, according to Rob Fanning. It likes old fields, but unfortunately that habitat is slowly disappearing and thrasher numbers are on the decline. It seems many birds enjoy nuts, including American Crows. Carol Flanagan watched a Crow eat several spilt peanuts from her deck and then fly off with a few. Jim Wright reported a similar experience with Fish Crows in Allendale. He had a gang of them show up to devour his peanuts, kick out the Blue Jays and put on a “great show.” And would you believe, American Goldfinches also like nuts. Rosemarie Widmer’s thistle feeders in Allendale were neglected this winter by the Goldfinches. They instead fed at her nut feeder. Charles West’s Hour on the Tower crew was entertained by a battle between a Great Blue Heron and Tree Swallows, June 2. Charles described the bout as follows: A Great Blue landed atop a Wood Duck box, and its “tenants,” a Tree Swallow pair, together with “supporting swallow flock, took umbrage” with the heron’s usurpation. The resulting fifteen-minute war, “consisting of swoops and dives and bobbing and weaving” kept the Tower crew captivated. It ended as a “No Decision.”



Don’t forget to check the skies for migrants, be they Nighthawks or genuine hawks. Fall provides us with many more days to get out there and enjoy the southward push of species. We hope you’ll share your observations with the rest of us. 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 judycing@optonline.net.

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**The Eyes Have It, A Story of a FYKE Birding Trip**  
**By COOX2 (aka Charley West)**

Trip Leader (TL): “Welcome. Glad to see y’all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed as we say in the trade. The weather’s sure to improve! So, as it warms up and stops drizzling, we’ll be more comfortable. There’s coffee and donuts at the back of the van.”  
 “Since this here’s a Wildlife Preserve, those folks wearing flame-orange hunting gear might want to change.”

“Any Questions?”

Novice Birder #1 (NB1): “Is there any Decafe?”

Novice Birder #2 (NB2): “Is there any Tea?”

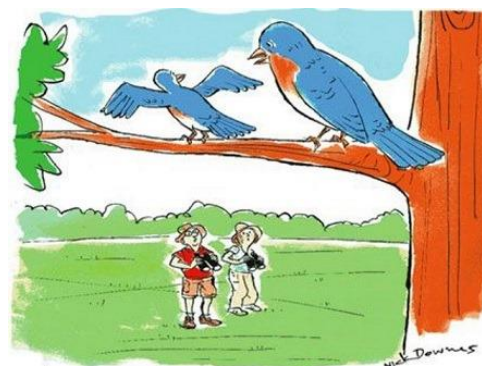
Novice Birder #3 (NB3): “Can I borrow a jacket?”

(TL): “Sure. . . Here’s my Cabella’s camo coat.”

Novice Birder #4 (NB4): “I forgot my opera glasses. Do you have an extra pair?”

(TL): “Yes . . . But please be careful, they’re Swarovski’s and very expensive!”

Experienced Birder #1 (EB1): “Are the donuts gluten-free? Can we start soon — my feet are cold”?



“Not yet. Don’t fly off until the moment they raise their binoculars.”

[Interlude as group moves; hushed moans & groans.]

(TL): “Whoa! Looka there!- -There’s a Ruby-throated Hummer atop that Butterfly Bush.”

(NB1): “Where? I don’t see it!”

(TL): “That purple bush — at eye level — 25 feet in front of you! At 12:00 o’clock — I’ll explain.”

(TL): “It’s a system used by most guides to help you find the bird. Say there’s bird in a bush or tree; think of that location as a clock face. If the target’s at the top-center, I’ll say 12 o’clock; if it’s is at low-center I’ll say 6 o’clock; left edge 9 o’clock; and right edge 3 o’clock.”

(NB1): “My watch and phone are both digital, not analog. What then?”

(TL): “Well then think of a compass, with north @ 12; south @ 6; west @ 9; and east @ 3.

(NB1): “My phone has a compass but I never use it.”

[TL Perplexed, but NO reply.]

(NB2): “Why do they call it a Butterfly Bush? Why not call it a Hummer Bush?”

[TL Perplexed; a reply is framed but not spoken.]

(EB1): “My feet are colder! How about more bird action? Want to know how many birds I saw in Belize?”

(TL): “Yeah! Tropical birding’s great but we’re not there now. There’s a lake just ahead — should be Ducks, Waders, and maybe Shorebirds.”

(NB1): “You said ‘Lake’? The ‘Shore’s’ at the ocean.”

(TL): “These birds can be spooky — try to be as quiet as possible while I set up the scope.”

[3 of 4 van doors are slammed shut — EB1 Yells -“QUIET!” — TL whimpers.]

(TL): “I’ve got the scope on two Waders, the white one’s a Great Egret, the gray one’s a Great Blue Heron.”

(NB3): “They’re on land, they’re not “Wading”! And why is one an “Egret” and the other a “Heron”? And one is white and one is blue. Why aren’t they called “White Wader” and “Blue Wader”?”

[The scope is bumped - TL whimpers again.]

(NB2): “I only see bunch of tall grass with cigars on it.”

(TL): “Wading” is their method to hunt for food. Right now they’re like our friend here - their feet are cold so they’re on land to warm up.”

(EB1): “Hey! I don’t appreciate that remark! And my scope is better than yours; it’s a variable with 20 to 60 magnification.”

(TL): “Apologies (as he realigns the scope); just a poor attempt at humor. Scope-wise I’ve opted for a wide-angle lens, it’s easier for groups. The waders have flown but there are several groups of Ducks. The main divisions here are “Puddle Ducks” and “Diving Ducks”.

(NB1): “Now it’s a “Puddle”? What happened to the ocean?”

[TL attempts to explain the feeding differences.]

(TL): “See how some just put their heads underwater and their butts up in the air, while others dive deep, submerging their entire bodies. It’s your first clue in making your ID. Secondly you look at GISS - General Size and Shape. Then Diagnostic Specifics like feather coloring, and lastly, Habitat; you wouldn’t expect Albatrosses at the Celery Farm.”

(NB2): “Say What?”

(NB1&3): “Is there a bathroom here? Too much coffee!”

(EB1): “Tough it out! In Asia we had to dig slit trenches.”

(NB4): “I dropped those loaner bins you gave me, but I think they’re OK, that crack in the left big lens was there before.”

[TL sobs openly . . . The rain increases.]

## Flight Fuel By Judith Cinquina

Robins crowd the Winter Garden at Skylands in Ringwood, competing for cedar and juniper berries, crashing through the trees, cursing with short “teeks” and “tucks.” It is autumn. Robins are no longer the reserved hunters of summer lawns. Even their stomachs have changed, becoming muscular to handle the fruits and berries their migrant flocks chance upon. Come late October they will be all over the crab apple trees near the Pirie platform at the Celery Farm, threatening one another with open beaks, arguing over the cherry-sized fruits packed with sugary energy. After a frost or two, the tiny apples will be “cooked” and soft like applesauce. Those the migrants fail to find may help sustain an over-wintering Hermit Thrush or Waxwing come January or February.

October 4, Catbirds, colorful warblers, a Cardinal, Cedar Waxwings, and a variety of sparrows jockey for position in a Japanese Dogwood near the Skylands Manor entrance. The red fruit, fleshy and sweet enough for jam, provide lipids or fats needed by the birds for their nocturnal migrations. The lipids take longer to digest than sugary fruits like the crab apples but provide the energy essential for long distance migrations. A tiny, bright yellow warbler with a black mask works on a red berry with its bill, dropping the large seeds and skin to the ground and consuming only the pulp.

Robins and other migrants are important dispensers of many species of trees, shrubs, vines and grasses, and the plants, in turn, let the birds know when their seeds are ready to be dispersed by producing red, orange, purple or black fruits or leaves. There is no such thing as a constantly available food supply for birds, so these flags or signs save the migrants time and effort tracking down the best fuel for their migrations. Fruits containing the most lipids are the darkest, like the Common Yellowthroat’s dogwood berry. And it is why this dogwood attracted such a large variety of migrants. They will need those fats to fuel their long nocturnal flights south.



Standing in a magnolia tree, a Pileated Woodpecker stretches his black and white body toward its red, irregularly shaped fruits occasionally declaring with a “kuk-kuk” his good fortune. His ruby crest flashes in the sun, and you almost expect to hear the staccato laugh of Woody Woodpecker, whom he resembles. The fruit is two inches across and hard. Inside the casing, in individual pockets, are red berries. They smell pine-like and taste like turpentine. (Don’t ask.)

The lustrous orange-red leaves of poison ivy wind around a golden birch tree, eye candy for leaf peepers and a neon sign for hungry migrants. A Pileated can be found here, too, dining on the white poison ivy berries. It is interesting to note that the Pileated and Flicker and other woodpecker species that are fond of ants, despite their formic acid, are also partial to these poisonous fruits. In fact, the fruits are a popular dish for a great variety of birds, including grouse, the Catbird, some sparrows, Chickadees and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Even the Yellow-rumped Warbler can’t resist the fruit, and once half a dozen were discovered sipping the sap from a broken poison ivy vine. If any berries remain high in a tree above the snow line, they’ll be guarded by a wintering Mockingbird or Hermit Thrush.

The most delicious acorns are those of the white oak. Preferred by American Indians, they are the staff of life for many wildlife species. Two Blue Jays have found them on the shore of the Ramapo River in Mahwah. High in the tree, one picks an acorn and holds it with its feet. The hammering echoes across the river. Hopefully the acorn is ripe and its tannin content is no longer strong. Tannins are stored in the oak’s bark and fruit to protect it from bacteria and



fungi. Just like a good wine or tea, an acorn with too much tannin is not appealing. The Jays know to dine primarily on the sweeter top of the acorn and discard the rest. When they are satiated, the Jays will bury some acorns in the woods. Those they don't find again this winter may produce new trees.

Flocks of birds are hidden in the meadow at the end of Greenway in Allendale. A Song Sparrow perches up on a goldenrod and objects to an intruder with squeaky "tsit-tsit-tist" calls. The first White-throats and Juncos flush from the trail where they were dining on weeds, especially grasses of the genera *Panicum* and *Setaria*, like deer-tongue grass and yellow foxtail. These genera are two of the country's most important sources of food for ground feeding songbirds, game birds, and small mammals. A half dozen American Goldfinches, already in their olive winter dress, twitter happily in a patch of thistle. These and other seeds contain carotenoids that will be stored in their livers until the Goldfinches are ready to grow new bright yellow feathers.

The Cardinals of course are interested in red feathers that the red carotenoids in the dogwood berries at Skylands contain. Those and other berries and seeds aid the Cardinal in maintaining a continually vibrant red plumage. Put the Cardinal in a cage and feed it only carotenoid-free seeds, it will lose its brilliance with successive molts. For many birds, carotenoid content, whether it produces the yellow of a Goldfinch, the orange of an Oriole or scarlet of a Tanager, indicates a male bird's physical condition and influences his attractiveness to females. Carotenoids have antioxidant properties and are beneficial to human health, too.



Back at Skylands, eight Bluebirds flutter over a tangle of bright red Virginia creeper at the edge of the meadow and emit soft, mellow whistles. A male yanks at a small, hard purple berry. Although the fruit is an important winter food for birds, it contains amounts of oxalic acid toxic to humans. A Sharp-shinned Hawk appears in the Crab Apple Vista as if shot from a canon. It pulls in its wings and dives into a crab apple tree, rocking from side to side, as it maneuvers around branches after a Goldfinch. There is a scream, but the small hawk misses, alights in the tree, and begins to preen.

The meadow holds its breath. Nothing moves. Only a distant Jay ignores the hawk and continues hammering on acorns. With its long tail and short, rounded wings, the flicker-sized hawk is built to chase songbirds through woodlands. It is a young, mottled brown bird. Probably fledged in Canada, it has followed the Ramapo ridge to the plateau at Skylands. It is hungry but inexperienced.

Almost immediately the hawk is flanked by two Crows much larger than itself. It complains with a nasal sound and looks first over its left shoulder at one Crow, then turns its head toward the other. Its bright yellow talons shift nervously on the branch, and then it is airborne. Alternately flapping and sailing, pursued by the two black bouncers, it heads down the vista toward the Ramapos. The little hawk must follow the songbirds south, watching and learning. To survive until its first birthday, it must learn to execute a lightning fast sneak attack, so it too can dine on autumn's harvest.

Ten minutes pass before a few Goldfinches chance a quick flight across the Vista. The sun is getting low. Soon it will be night and time for many to migrate further south. They forage in the gardens one last time. When the sun rises again, more hungry migrants will drop down into the botanical garden, the Celery Farm and other fields that promise nuts, berries and seeds. The onslaught will continue. The potential energy in these fields and forest edges will fuel long migrations or mean the difference between life and death to those that stay behind.

**Thank You!**

We would like to thank Sandee Faust, Fyke member and photographer, for her generous donation to the Butterfly Garden. It has been used to buy plants, cedar mulch and other items (such as Mosquito Dunks), all of which have made our Butterfly Garden particularly lovely this year.



**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!



**Fyke Board of Trustees:**

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|                          | Darlene Lembo    |
|                          | Doug Morel       |

**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 Winter 2019 issue is October 23, 2019.** Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to [carolflana@aol.com](mailto:carolflana@aol.com).

