


Fyke Nature Association Winter Newsletter Vol. 65 – No. 4 – 2019

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 6, 2019 – 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 14, 2019 – 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. See page 3 for details on the CBC.



January 24, 2020 -- Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building, Pollinators in Peril: How you can help protect native pollinators, Blaine Rothauser

Butterflies, bumblebees, moths and other creatures help pollinate over 75% of our flowering plants and crops, contributing to over \$29 billion in crops each year. Currently many species of pollinators are struggling to survive. Join Blaine Rothauser of the Conserve Wildlife Foundation on a photogenic tour of the world of pollinators in New Jersey, exploring why pollinators are crucial to our environment, health, food systems and economy. Learn how to help the declining species of New Jersey pollinators with simple steps we can take to protect them in our own backyard.

February 28, 2020 – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building, Jersey City, The Wildlife, and Me, John Dunstan

In John's film he shows his observations including owls, wading birds, insects, black skimmers, woodpeckers and more through the years, all in this tremendous setting in Jersey City, Liberty State Park. Using different types of equipment, he takes pictures and records footage of animals and insects that you cannot photograph with an iPhone camera. The mega zoom bridge camera gives him the opportunity to snap photos of birds flying through the sky, while the macro diopter lens lets him capture the smallest of insects.

Dunstan goes at different times throughout the day, whether it is when the sun comes up or if there is fog outside, to capture a variety of scenes throughout the urban environment.

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

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 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 26, the sooner the better.



I'll incorporate images into PowerPoint slide shows for projection and test them with Fyke's projector. These can be automated slide shows, where one only makes comments at the start or traditional slide shows 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. 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 be tested and it will be presented from the same laptop as the other programs. Thus, we'll have fewer connection switchovers and a smoother meeting. My laptop will be connected to the meeting room speakers. So, if your program includes audio, do get it to me ahead of time to take advantage of this.

Alternately you may use your own laptop in conjunction with Fyke's projector but please let me know your intention to do so by the November 26 deadline. We've experienced a few problems in the past with such non-tested hook-ups. So, I'm again planning for any using their own laptops to be the first presenters. If there's a problem, that presentation will be skipped but can be tried again toward the end of the meeting.

We'll again use my Drop Box account to transmit pictures or finished presentations. This enables us to exchange much larger files and hence no need for multiple emails, or snail mailing discs or flash drives.

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

**Christmas Bird Count – 2019**  
**By Lisa Ann Fanning**



The 68th annual Ramsey Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held Saturday, December 14, 2019, as part of Audubon’s 120th 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](mailto: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>

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Field and Feeder Notes
By Judith Cinquina

The relationship of the dowitchers had long been misunderstood until Pitelka (1950) did much to clarify it. They were formerly considered to be conspecific (of the same species); some authorities still consider them so.... It is also true that under ordinary circumstances the two forms are often difficult to differentiate in the field.... The non-breeding plumages are practically identical and bill lengths are often misleading, as the latter overlap.... Only when direct comparison is available and “extremes” picked out, may identification be certain, but only by experienced and competent observers...

Bull, John, Birds of the New York Area, 1964

Birding has come a long way since 1964. A birder must still be “experienced” and “competent” to differentiate a Long-billed from a Short-billed Dowitcher, but you don’t have to be David Sibley. Most current field guides contain adequate information to guide anyone willing to study the two species. On September 12, Jim Wright posted a photo of a Long-billed found and identified by Fred Weber at the Celery Farm (CF). One of my mentors used to say that a Long-bill looks like it swallowed an orange. Fred spotted the Long-bill foraging on the mud and recognized its “plump” shape, as opposed to a slimmer Short-bill. He also noted its very long bill, which Jim’s photo showed quite well. Although bill length doesn’t eliminate the Short-billed

Dowitcher, it helped with the identification. Fred further commented, "When it came close enough, I could see the black back feathers with reddish edges, gray wings and breast through my scope." He described a juvenile Long-billed perfectly. A juvenile Short-billed might have similar back feather coloring, but its wings would also have black feathers with reddish trim, and its breast would have been buffy. The Long-billed sighting was the CF's first "definite" CF record, Fred wrote. According to eBird, it was also the CF's 257th species. Other Fyke members observed it through the 14th, but it failed to show up for the Hour on the Tower crew the next day.

A Sedge Wren was photographed at Halifax in Mahwah, September 28. Doug Morel witnessed this rare sighting. Considered a NJ Endangered Species, the Sedge Wren formerly bred in inland marshes and salt marshes in our state, but according to Boyle's Birds of NJ, "all but disappeared as a nesting species during the late 1900's, due largely to habitat loss." Smaller than the more common Marsh Wren, it is very secretive and sightings of it perched out in the open are rare. The photographer who took its photo at Halifax was very lucky. The photo caught the wren on a limb, out in the open, and showed its white back and crown stripes. Almost as elusive and unpredictable as a Sedge Wren, a Winter Wren turned up at Mary Patrick Park (Mahwah Green Acres), September 29. Simon Streatfeild spotted this smallest of our local wrens. Winter Wrens breed in our state in damp, remote places, especially in western NJ. The more common and slightly larger Marsh Wren sang repeatedly at the CF, September 21, according to Rob Fanning. Sporting only white stripes on its back, not its crown, this wren used to nest at the CF. Dozens of them nest annually in the phragmites at DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst.



Another infrequent migrant, a Lark Sparrow was observed at DeKorte by Brian Kenney, October 9. Found and photographed the day before, it was keeping company with a mixed flock of sparrows near the methane burner on Disposal Road. According to Boyle, this rare fall vagrant is more likely to pop up along our coast. With a boldly patterned, dark and white face, white breast pinned with a black spot, and white outer tail feathers, this handsome sparrow breeds in central and western North America with limited nesting noted eastward. It disappeared by the 13th. A Lincoln's Sparrow, another uncommon fall migrant, was discovered by my class at Halifax, September 26 and photographed by Alice Leurck. Her photos captured it with crown feathers erect, one of its defining behaviors. Resembling a Song Sparrow but with a smaller, gentler face, shorter tail and short, finer breast stripes, the Lincoln nests in bushy bogs and wet meadows across Canada. Doug Morel reported two at Halifax two days later. Whether we were ready for it or not, the first White-throated Sparrow was spotted by the Hour on the Tower crew, October 6. Doug counted 16 at Halifax, October 19.



Not unusual for the CF, an American Bittern became the "Bird of the Day" for the Tower crew, September 29. On October 13, Betty McDonnell had her own American Bittern on the mudflats of her Mahwah Pond. She believed it was her third sighting since she began tracking her yard birds. She also reported hearing a Great Horned Owl the night before at twilight. She wrote that she tried to answer it and then heard a second owl from a different location. "Then the three of us got into a conversation," Betty wrote. The fall is usually when Great Horns begin to pair, but a pair in Midland Park jumped the gun. On August 31, Tom Nicastrì heard two "singing love songs to each other." He stated, "They moved around the neighborhood, hooting and staking out their turf."

I remember when Cooper's Hawks were very uncommon in NJ. In fact, in 1976 they were placed on NJ's Threatened Species list. And now no one thinks twice about seeing them at the CF. On September 1, a family of "at least four" became one of the "Birds of the Day" for those on the Tower. That day's BODs were chosen "based on their choreographies," Charles West wrote. The Coop family chased "everything in sight, including herons, ducks and even the Kingfisher." And the Kingfisher's "waltzes dazzled with swoops and dives and hoverings," Charles wrote. Another raptor we have almost taken for granted is the once very rare Bald Eagle. Two adults were spotted by my class at the Overpeck Stables in Teaneck, October 10. The morning was cold and began with clouds and a few sprinkles and finally a large rainbow, which one of the adult eagles flew through. We knew that was a good omen. Humans and birds hovered around sunny edges of the field to warm up, where up to six Pine Warblers were noted in the pines and four plus Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, adults and an immature hunted the boles of trees. Well, at least the adults were on the trees. The immature was on a telephone pole right at a busy intersection.



Out of approximately 100 C. Grackles at Darlington, September 27, Charles West found one with partial leucism. Its head was "flecked" with white or pied, Charles wrote. He found another grackle nearby with a single white primary. Perhaps they were siblings, for leucism tends to run in families. Leucism is caused not by a lack of pigment, but by a reduced deposition of pigment in the feathers, according to Kenneth V. Rosenberg et.al.

My birthday present was five C. Nighthawks over Anona Lake in Upper Saddle River, August 20. The next day, Rob Fanning reported two Nighthawks put on a show, mid-day over the CF. They were occasionally chased by Rough-winged Swallows. He also counted three Pectoral Sandpipers that were content to stay overnight and show up for the Hour on the Tower gang on the 22nd. Scarlet Tanagers are expected during September and October as they head to the tropics. But when three showed up at once at my birdbath in Upper Saddle River, September 30, I was very surprised. All were in their yellow-green winter plumage, but I noticed that each one had a bit of white trim on its secondaries and tertials. They were perhaps first-year birds. So, two days later, when two appeared again at my birdbath and had no white trim anywhere, I realized these had to be different and probably adult tanagers. We were experiencing a mini draught at the time. Perhaps the sound of dripping water proved irresistible. The birds seemed to travel together, yet when one was in the bath, it threatened any other if it attempted to jump in.



According to North American Birds On-Line (R. Dellinger et.al), the Hermit Thrush is one of the most "widely distributed forest-nesting migratory birds" in N. America and the only forest thrush whose population has "increased or remained stable over the past 20 years." Yet, when was the last time you saw more than one Hermit Thrush during migration? I checked eBird, and even looked at records over the years in a wide area around Bergen County. Most reports were of one, but a report of two or sometimes three was not unusual. Like Robins, Hermits like to bathe, so I wasn't surprised when one showed up in the bath in my Upper Saddle River yard, October 11. My dripper does attract many species and when two argued over the bath the next day, I chalked that up to the spate of dry weather. Through October 20, at least two visited my birdbath daily, sometimes arriving at dusk, while I was preparing dinner. Then on the 21st, the first hit the bath at 5:15 p.m. and as the light began to fade, more arrived. At 6:15 just as one thrush flew off, and the birds were mere shadows, impossible to detect without binoculars,

five tumbled onto the birdbath area. I found only one eBird record of five recorded north of us in Harriman State Park last year, and one spring record of seven west of us a few years ago. I have no idea how many were in my yard that evening.

Let us know what turns up in your backyard or anywhere you bird in the Fyke area. 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 judycinq@optonline.net.

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## The Big Sit! 2019

By Carol Flanagan

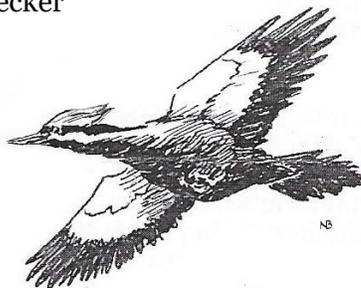
Thanks to all the members of our team, the Celery Stalkers, who participated our 25<sup>th</sup> Big Sit! The Big Sit! is an event started by the New Haven Bird Club and now sponsored by Birdwatchers Digest. The rules are simple, you sit inside a circle 17 feet in diameter for 24 hours and count all 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 46 species. We added 3 new species, Fish Crow, Hermit Thrush, and Wild Turkey bringing our cumulative total to 129 species!



**Thank you to our Participants:** John Bird, Brian Kenney, Doug Morel, Kurt Muenz, Gaby Schmitt, Charley West, and Jim Wright.

### Species list:

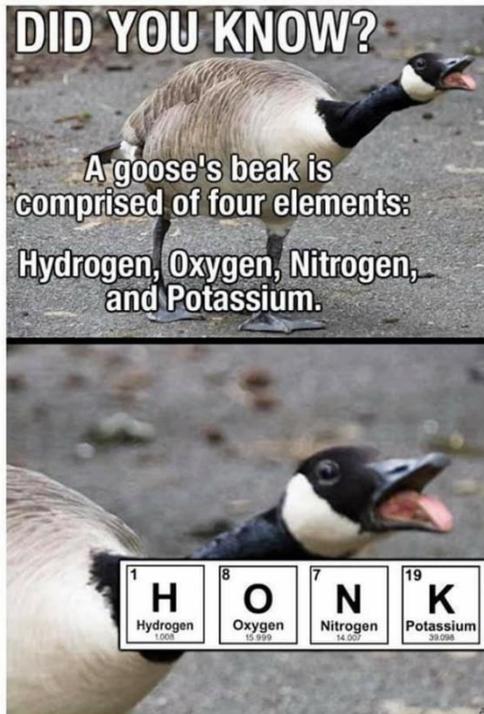
- |                        |                        |                        |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| American Black Duck    | European Starling      | Red-shouldered Hawk    |
| American Crow          | Fish Crow              | Red-tailed Hawk        |
| American Goldfinch     | Gadwall                | Red-winged Blackbird   |
| American Robin         | Gray Catbird           | Ruby-crowned Kinglet   |
| American Wigeon        | Great Blue Heron       | Song Sparrow           |
| Belted Kingfisher      | Green-winged Teal      | Spotted Sandpiper      |
| Black-capped Chickadee | Hairy Woodpecker       | Swamp Sparrow          |
| Blue Jay               | Hermit Thrush          | Tufted Titmouse        |
| Brown-headed Cowbird   | House Sparrow          | White-throated Sparrow |
| Canada Goose           | Mallard                | Wild Turkey            |
| Carolina Wren          | Mourning Dove          | Wilson's Snipe         |
| Cedar Waxwing          | Mute Swan              | Wood Duck              |
| Common Raven           | Northern Cardinal      | Yellow-rumped Warbler  |
| Cooper's Hawk          | Northern Flicker       | Empid species          |
| Downy Woodpecker       | Northern Shoveler      |                        |
| Eastern Phoebe         | Red-bellied Woodpecker |                        |



## Welcome New Members!



Elisabeth Mannschott/Al Blomquist, Ridgewood,  
Lisa Johnson and Family, Ramsey  
Edward Kanze, Boomingdale, New York  
Eleanor McKenzie, Ramsey  
Andy Muenz and Family, Brookhaven, Pennsylvania  
Bob Muenz and Family, Ann Arbor, Michigan  
Alan Pomerantz, Oakland  
Linda Symon and Family, Upper Saddle River  
Cecilia Weiss, Santa Monica, California  
Mitch Weiss, Oakland



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

(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.)

(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!



**How glorious a greeting the sun gives the mountains.**

**~ John Muir**



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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).



**The deadline for the Spring 2020 issue is January 22, 2020.** Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to [carolflana@aol.com](mailto:carolflana@aol.com).