



Fyke Nature Association Winter Newsletter

Vol. 66 – No. 4 – 2020

Due to Corona virus restrictions, member meetings will be online on Zoom, and a link will be sent out in advance. If you are not registered on Zoom, you can register for free at <https://zoom.us/>

Our next Monthly Members meetings will be held on Friday, January 22, 2021, and Friday, February 26, 2021. A newsletter update will be sent once the details on these meetings are available.

Field trips will require face masks, social distancing, and no sharing of optics.

Please check our website and emails for any updates on meetings and field trips.

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.

Weekend Starting December 4, 2020 – Members Night 2020, Kurt Muenz

The usual first Friday in December monthly meeting cannot be held in person due to Corona Virus restrictions. In its place we're urging Fyke's many photographers to share nature pictures via email. So be on the lookout for these during and possibly beyond that weekend. Photographers able to share should contact Kurt, elkumu@aceweb.com.

December 2020 – Christmas Bird Count

Audubon has issued guidelines for the 121st Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Fyke's CBC co-compilers, Lisa and Rob Fanning, will make the decision based on these guidelines after November 15, 2020. Please check Fyke's website and emails for updates on the CBC.



Audubon's two options for Christmas Bird Count are:

“Option 1: Run a COVID-19 safe and socially distanced CBC, if local rules allow. [Must wait until November 15 at the earliest to choose this option in order to better understand status of COVID outbreak in your region during the CBC.]”

“Option 2: If option 1 is not possible, cancel this season's CBC for your location.”

Field and Feeder Notes By Judith Cinquina

The worst kept secret, most Purple Finches will migrate south out of Eastern Canada this winter....With Spruce Budworm outbreaks becoming widespread in the eastern boreal forest, the Purple Finches appear to be benefiting from an abundant food source during breeding season.

Large numbers of (Pine) siskins are currently being reported in areas with excellent spruce crops in the western boreal forest. The smaller numbers remaining in the eastern boreal forest should move southward looking for food. At feeders they prefer nyger (thistle) seeds in silo feeders.

The Red-breasted Nuthatch has been irrupting south since mid-August....Individuals have made it as far as Oklahoma and Alabama. With cone crops in the eastern boreal forest mostly poor, expect this species to continue to move southward. At feeders, this species prefers black oil seed, suet, and peanuts.

From: Ron Pittaway's Winter Finch Forecast. (Note: Ron has been forecasting winter finch movements since before 1999 but this will be his last. Tyler Hoar will take over future forecasts.)

When lemmings are abundant, Snowy Owl produce many young and suddenly the Northeast is awash in owl sightings. But, in spite of the abundant crop of Purple Finches fueled by a Spruce Budworm outbreak, only a sprinkling of Purple Finches have been detected in the Fyke area. The first two reported here were seen at the Celery Farm (CF) on October 3 by Doug Morel. Small numbers turned up throughout Bergen and Passaic counties through the 17th and could turn up at feeders this winter. But no major push was detected, although small flocks of a couple dozen at a time have been passing over Mount Peter regularly. Check those House Finches at your feeders for the immature or female Purples with wide, whitish eyebrows and the males sporting a raspberry coat and a white breast.



Pine Siskins are a different story. Although only one was reported at a feeder by Betty McDonnell in Mahwah, October 12, a major surge moved through the Ringwood area between October 8 and 17. Stephanie Seymour reported, "They were everywhere, flying in large flocks," making loud "tiny fighter jet, pew-pew-pew calls." She estimated 200 in her Ringwood yard on the 8th, 345 on the 9th, 185 on the 11th, another 175 on the 15th and finally a single siskin on the 17th. Many fed in her birches, a favorite siskin food. Some could turn up at feeders this winter, perhaps in March as they begin their migration back north. They, too, could get lost in a House Finch flock, resembling the female House Finch but smaller, with smaller bills and pronounced forks to their tails. The giveaway is spotting a bit of yellow in their wings or under their tails or hearing their buzzy, rising zreeeeee calls.



A Red-breasted Nuthatch was a welcome arrival at Betty's Mahwah feeder, October 3. The next day Eric Sibbald enjoyed one in his Upper Saddle River yard and Stephanie counted four in Ringwood. We've noted up to four a day moving over the Mount Peter hawk watch. Tiny and very active, a Red-breasted Nuthatch moves with the "quickness of thought," John James Audubon wrote. Unquestionably, this tiny nuthatch can be as difficult to follow with your eyes as a kinglet or hummingbird. The Red-breasted is our only North American nuthatch that

undergoes regular irruptions south because of food shortages on their northern breeding grounds.

Quite a few rare to uncommon birds were found this fall in the Fyke area. Probably the most uncommon was the Nelson's Sparrow found by Fred Weber at Crestwood Lake, Allendale, September 30. Doug Morel stated it was feeding in weeds at the edge of the phragmites. Although insects are its primary food, it depends on seeds during migration. A "life" bird for Laurie Neu, it was enjoyed by a number of other Fyke members. Lumped with its cousin the Saltmarsh, it was called a Sharp-tailed Sparrow until 1995, when it was recognized as a separate species. The two species are difficult to tell apart. Both have short, ragged tails and wide, Gulden-mustard-colored supercilium (eyebrow) but the Nelson's supercilium matches the orange on its chest while the Saltmarsh's chest is a paler orange. When disturbed, it will run along the ground, head thrust forward, like a mouse.

Connecticut Warblers are expected, but just try to find one! Very secretive and one of our latest fall warblers, they usually come to you when you're very lucky, and Doug Morel, Loren Anderson and Alice Leurck were among the lucky ones. Doug found his Connecticut, a male at Halifax in Mahwah on October 9. It was first discovered on the 3rd, so Doug was fortunate it stuck around. A large warbler that prefers to walk on the ground Ovenbird-like, it has a gray hood, bold white eyering, and yellow underparts including its long yellow undertail coverts (a primary field mark). Loren and Alice discovered theirs, a pale female at Parsons Pond Park in Franklin Lakes in a Cedar. "It first appeared very low in an evergreen," Loren wrote, "then flushed to a tree where I got just a couple quick photos." Another habit of there is to flush up like a thrush and perch as still as a stone, which allowed Loren to capture a definitive view of its yellow undertail coverts.



Eleven American Pipits were on the muddy shoreline of Crestwood Lake, October 11, Doug Morel reported. Drained every fall, the mud flats there also attracted a variety of shorebirds this season, including Solitary, Spotted and Least Sandpipers, both Yellowlegs, Wilson Snipe, and a Semipalmated Plover. Brian Kenney also found a Marsh Wren there October 3. Winter Wrens, those dark, tiny, perky-tailed wrens that hang out in damp woods near fallen trees, turned up in October. On the 10th I had one exploring my patio and picnic table for insects. On the 14th and 17th, Neil MacLennan enjoyed another at the CF.

Brown Thrashers are disappearing from our area. No one has found them nesting at the CF recently, but Mike Limatola did have "nice views" of one near the Allendale Brook there, September 28. Another was discovered by Lisa Potash at Halifax, September 23, where they used to nest. The Rusty Blackbird, another disappearing species, was the "Bird of the Day" for the Hour on the Tower crew, October 4, Charley West reported. It was perched in the top of a tree near the Tower and presented a challenge with just an underside view. A very early Tree Sparrow hanging with a flock of White-throated Sparrows was at Halifax and spotted by Doug Morel on the October 9 and by Daniel Carola two days later. According to rules that I learned from old-time birders, Tree Sparrows arrive when Chipping Sparrows are gone, usually at the end of October and into November. But this Tree Sparrow didn't read the rule book. Chipping Sparrows are still here. Common Nighthawks are decreasing, and mostly singles were spotted in our area. Monica Cardoza had three over Ridgewood, August 24 when they're expected. A single Nighthawk over nearby Sterling Forest, N.Y. October 1 seemed late.



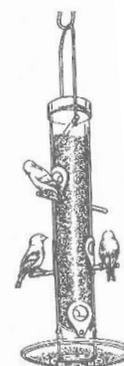
An enterprising Snowy Egret discovered a new fishing method. Tom Mitchell provided a video on our Fyke site of the Snowy blowing bubbles to attract fish at Mill Creek Marsh in Secaucus, September 25. He also recommended Mill Creek as a “wonderful place” to see fall warblers, since there are no tall trees. With the trails bordered by water on either side, warblers are forced to stay close to the walking path, he stated.

It’s amazing how many birds use the CF for roosting during migration. Neil MacLennan provided stats from counts he conducted at sunset in late September into October. On September 26, he noted “waves” of Common Grackles, 500 in all, at sunset along the western side of the CF. The 30th brought 350 Starlings, and October 1, another 175 Starlings and 400 Robins before sunset. Finally, on October 17, Neil recorded another 275 Grackles. Our little marsh provides sanctuary to untold species, including us.

Fyke members have also been counting migrant Chimney Swifts in flight and at roost sites. On August 24, Laurie Neu encountered “close to 100” Chimney Swifts in Montvale. It was late, 7:00 p.m. and the swifts were high overhead. “It was pretty neat,” she wrote. The afternoon of August 28 brought 80 Chimney Swifts over the Ramapo River in Oakland, Loren Anderson reported. Gaby Schmitt began observing swifts in Bergenfield on the 24th, where she had discovered them roosting at the Transfiguration Academy in past years. After five evenings of counting, her highest tally was 108. That’s “not nearly the number we’ve seen at the Washington School” in Ridgewood in the past, she wrote. “I often hear their chittering sounds before I see them,” she stated. “Then they start coming in two’s and three’s, and a short time later, there are dozens swirling around snatching the last few bugs before dropping into the chimney.” On August 17, Kurt Muenz observed a Chimney Swift staging area in Ridgewood, “but it’s not at George Washington School,” he wrote. That evening he estimated 250 birds entered the chimney at the Willard School, which is about a mile north of George Washington. “They put on a nice flying and entry performance,” he stated. He recommended you first observe the pre-entry flying show from the field behind the school. Then as sunset approaches, walk toward the chimney and go up the steps and stand near the chimney. “You’ll get a close look at the entering birds,” he wrote. “Even those of you who are veterans of the shows we used to see at GW will find this view to be something new.” If you haven’t witnessed this annual tradition, mark your calendars for mid-August and get out there next year. You won’t be disappointed. At sunset, the chimneys that harbor the roosts seem to turn into giant vacuum cleaners, sucking the birds right out of the sky.

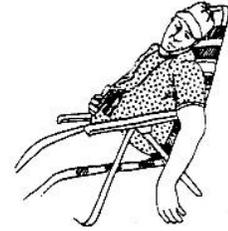


We’ll be looking for reports of northern finches at your feeders this winter. Keep those feeders filled and clean. And don’t forget to let us know what you find at home or in the field. Join our discussion group at fykenature@groups.io where many of the reports for this column originated. Or send your observations to me at judycinq@optonline.net.



The Big Sit! 2020
By Carol Flanagan

Thanks to all the members of our team, the Celery Stalkers, who participated our 26th Big Sit! The Big Sit! is an event started by the New Haven Bird Club. 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 58 species. We added 3 new species, Swainson’s Thrush, Pileated Woodpecker, and Pine Warbler, bringing our cumulative total to 132 species!



Thank you to our Participants:

Mark Kantrowitz, Anne Keating, Doug Morel, Alan Pomerantz, Gabriele Schmitt, Nick Sweatlock, Kevin Watson

Species list:

- | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Pied-billed Grebe | Lesser Yellowlegs | Ruby-crowned Kinglet |
| Great Blue Heron | Mourning Dove | American Robin |
| Turkey Vulture | Belted Kingfisher | Gray Catbird |
| Black Vulture | Red-bellied Woodpecker | European Starling |
| Canada Goose | Yellow-bellied Sapsucker | Nashville Warbler |
| Mute Swan | Downy Woodpecker | Yellow-rumped Warbler |
| Wood Duck | Hairy Woodpecker | Pine Warbler |
| Gadwall | Northern Flicker | Common Yellowthroat |
| American Wigeon | Pileated Woodpecker | Song Sparrow |
| American Black Duck | Eastern Phoebe | Swamp Sparrow |
| Mallard | Blue Jay | White-throated Sparrow |
| Blue-winged Teal | Common Raven | Dark-eyed Junco |
| Northern Shoveler | American Crow | Northern Cardinal |
| Green-winged Teal | Swainson's Thrush | Red-winged Blackbird |
| Osprey | Hermit Thrush | Rusty Blackbird |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | Black-capped Chickadee | Common Grackle |
| Cooper's Hawk | Tufted Titmouse | Purple Finch |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | Red-breasted Nuthatch | American Goldfinch |
| Red-tailed Hawk | White-breasted Nuthatch | |
| Merlin | Carolina Wren | |



“Knowing trees, I understand the meaning of patience. Knowing grass, I can appreciate persistence.”

– Hal Borland

TM Gallery
By Tom Mitchell

MONDAY, AUGUST 24, 2020
maintaining the preserve

We who have a personal history with the place
Watching the changes in vegetation over the years
Recognizing the succession of invaders of the land
Know that a natural area must be tended like a garden.

Of course it depends how you define natural
Since John Fell's peat bog harvesting was not
And the subsequent celery farm cultivation was not
Along with the current impacts of us as human invaders.

Here it means an area set aside as a restoration project
A watery island in the sea of development around it
An oasis of sorts for wildlife in need of suitable habitat
If we encourage the conditions for them to thrive.

Every wetlands will fill in and get overgrown over time
As the natural progression happens without our intervention
But so many species of plants now taking root and taking over
Provide little nourishment to the creatures that live here.

They are the newest arrivals in the great global dispersal
Engineered as an unintended consequence of international trade
Too soon yet for the eventual local adaptation to occur
The way the European roadside weeds now seem native.

At present we have to weed them out in a constant battle
The bane of gardeners whose work is never done
The porcelain berry, mustard garlic, phragmites and many more
Calling for a dedicated crew to maintain the preserve.



Red-tails in Suburbia
By Judy Cinquina with Gaby Schmitt

Sometimes teenagers need a bit of help from the neighbors. They fool around, end up in trouble, and someone calls the proper authorities. In this case, the teens were two fledgling Red-tailed Hawks, the neighbors were folks near Bergenfield and the authority was the Raptor Trust in Millington, NJ, near the Great Swamp. The Raptor Trust rescues, rehabs and then releases

wild birds that are injured, abandoned or in trouble, and Gaby Schmitt is one of their volunteers. On May 25, Gaby was called by the Trust and asked to check an address in the Bergenfield area. A juvenile Red-tailed Hawk (J1) had been brought in and, as it had been examined and found to be healthy, the Trust wanted it “re-homed” as soon as possible. The Trust and any good rehabber will try to return a wild animal to its familiar home territory where it stands the best chance of surviving. Gaby phoned the homeowner for permission to look things over and learned a second juvenile (J2) was now on the ground.

By the time Gaby arrived at the site, J2 had made it across the street to a neighbor’s yard, and was perched on a “lovely, leafy cushion” on a porch next to the house. Now Gaby’s job was to catch the bird and get it back across the street close to or on its nest tree, a very tall evergreen. Red-tails have large feet and long, sharp talons that enable it to subdue and carry prey as large as squirrels and rabbits. Those strong feet can do a lot of harm if a hawk feels threatened, so Gaby had to handle J2 with care and immobilize those feet. She also had to avoid J2’s strong, hooked bill. With guidance from Trust personnel, Gaby’s rescue was successful. She caught J2 and returned it across the street to a low branch at the back of its nest tree. Her next chore was to retrieve J1 and reunite the siblings.



Photo of J2 by Gaby Schmitt

“Red-tailed Hawks are fledging and exploring their surroundings,” Gaby explained in her email to me. She continued, “They are still being watched over by the adults, but like human teenagers, they don’t always make good decisions.” Gaby considered J1 and 2 “lucky” because they are in a “lovely, quiet neighborhood with lots of huge old trees and with humans who really enjoy having them around and will make the call when something’s wrong.” The young typically leave the nest for the first time about 42-46 days after hatching. J1 and 2 were in their “branching” stage, hopping from branch to branch, trying and strengthening their wings and preparing for the big event when they actually take flight. That’s how they both ended up on the ground. Their parents were always nearby and ready to provide them with food and to lure them back up to the nest, but their neighbors didn’t know that.

Red-tailed Hawks have increased in North America during the latter half of the 1800’s in response to more open spaces dotted with large trees in place of grasslands or dense forests. More recently, they have adapted well to more urban environments as long as there are perch sites for hunting, tall trees or structures for nesting, and available food. Since they will eat a variety of foods including squirrels and other small mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, arthropods, and fresh carrion, they have increased in towns and even cities like New York. They have been known to dive right into a crowd in Central Park and successfully come up with a pigeon or squirrel with barely anyone noticing. Red-tails have become a common hawk across North America with a global population of two million or more.

Gaby retrieved J1 from the Trust, and by the time she returned, J2 had branch hopped up to about 35ft toward the back of the nest tree. Its parents were circling and calling high overhead. Gaby placed J1 on a low-hanging branch about four feet high, where it seemed stable and left. On her way home, the homeowner called to say both juveniles were branch hopping up to the nest. “Some days,” Gaby concluded, “are just awesome!”

Stepping Up for the Celery Farm 2020 (Autumnal version)
October 17 & 18, 2020
By Gabriele Schmitt

Here are the results of our first Autumnal Stepping Up for the Celery Farm, the compilation of several lists from the various participants who walked the trails and inventoried as many birds as they could see and/or hear. Our total number of bird species was an impressive 65!

Sincere thanks to all who participated: John Bird, Julie Bramble, Sue Dougherty, Anne Keating, Mike Limatola, Tom Mitchell, Doug Morel, Alan Pomerantz, Stephanie Swanzey, Nicholas Sweatlock, Kevin Watson, and Charles West.

Thank you to those of you who have pledged an amount per species. Kindly to do your arithmetic and submit your payments. Pledges can be fulfilled, dues can be paid and additional donations made by using the Donate button on www.fykenature.org, or by check made out to Fyke Nature Association, mailed to: Kurt Muenz, 25 Berry Place, Glen Rock, NJ 07452

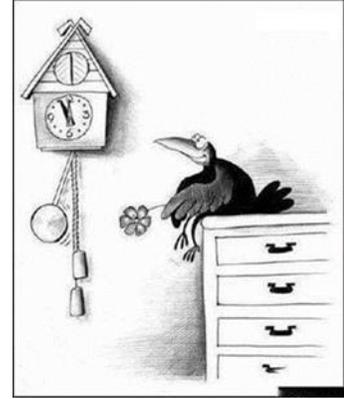


Species list:

Canada Goose	Red-bellied Woodpecker	American Robin
Mute Swan	Downy Woodpecker	House Sparrow
Wood Duck	Hairy Woodpecker	House Finch
Northern Shoveler	Pileated Woodpecker	Purple Finch
Gadwall	Northern Flicker	Pine Siskin
Mallard	Peregrine Falcon	American Goldfinch
American Black Duck	Eastern Phoebe	Field Sparrow
Green-winged Teal	Blue-headed Vireo	Dark-eyed Junco
Ruddy Duck	Blue Jay	White-throated Sparrow
Wild Turkey	American Crow	Song Sparrow
Rock Pigeon	Common Raven	Swamp Sparrow
Mourning Dove	Black-capped Chickadee	Eastern Towhee
Greater Yellowlegs	Tufted Titmouse	Red-winged Blackbird
Great Blue Heron	Tree Swallow	Rusty Blackbird
Turkey Vulture	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Common Grackle
Osprey	Red-breasted Nuthatch	Tennessee Warbler
Northern Harrier	White-breasted Nuthatch	Blackpoll Warbler
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Brown Creeper	Palm Warbler
Cooper's Hawk	Carolina Wren	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Red-shouldered Hawk	European Starling	Northern Cardinal
Red-tailed Hawk	Gray Catbird	Indigo Bunting
Belted Kingfisher	Hermit Thrush	

Welcome New Members!

William Conroy and Family, Allendale
Joseph DeLuccia and Family, Ramsey
Anita DiGiulio, Fair Lawn
Debra Kleinen and Family, Hillsdale
Diana Eisner Stroud and Family, Upper Saddle River



Holiday Shopping?

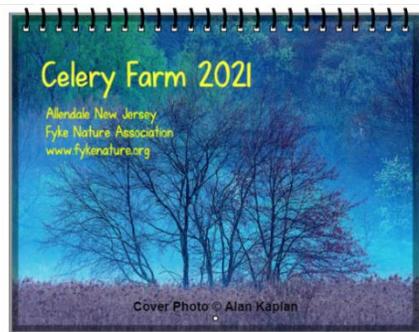
While doing your online holiday shopping, don't forget Fyke has a direct link to Amazon from our website. It works for all purchases, and it doesn't cost you anything extra. Fyke does not endorse any particular merchant. Log onto www.fykenature.org and click on "Shop". On the next page, click on the 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.)

Celery Farm Calendars, T-shirts, and Caps!

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



Bats have belly buttons just like people (and sometimes they're outies)!

Dues Reminder from Fyke Treasurer Kurt Muenz

Thanks to those of you who are paid up for the September 2020 thru August 2021 Fyke Year. However well over half of last year's members have not yet renewed their membership. If you are one of these, please immediately write yourself a note to pay your 2020/21 dues. That way you'll hopefully not forget to do so once you leave this newsletter issue.

Annual dues are \$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.



Fyke Board of Trustees:

President:	Mike Limatola
First Vice President:	Gabriele Schmitt
Second Vice President:	Penny Whitlock
Treasurer:	Kurt Muenz
Recording Secretary:	Molly Gardener
Corresponding Secretary:	Mimi Brauch
Trustees:	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, or contact Mike Limatola, President, mike.limatola@gmail.com. The Newsletter is published four times a year and manuscripts and artwork are welcome. Editor: Carol Flanagan, carolflana@aol.com.



The deadline for the Spring 2021 issue is January 20, 2021. Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to carolflana@aol.com.