



Fyke Nature Association Spring Newsletter

Vol. 68 — No. 1 — 2022

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.

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

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.

February 25, 2022, Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m.

The American Woodcock's Favorite New Jersey Haunts. Kathleen Farley

The woodcock is a bird of contradictions--a shorebird that lives in the woods, a cryptic species with a bold courtship display, and a declining species of concern that's also a gamebird. Join Rutgers PhD candidate Kathleen Farley for the inside scoop on the elusive American Woodcock, including where to observe them this time of year. Kathleen's research looks at how the woodcock copes with habitat options in NJ from its traditional young forest haunts to urban brownfields. Kathleen hopes to defend later this spring, so attendees will be getting her findings first, including behind-the-scenes research stories.

Kathleen is finishing a doctorate at Rutgers University-Newark. She first learned the difference between bluebirds and blue jays during an ornithology class at Cook College and has been interested in birds ever since. She did her masters at Montclair State on American Kestrels return rates and is looking forward to wrapping up her PhD so she can return to birding as a hobby.

March 12, 2022, Saturday – Field Trip: Woodcocks, Greenway at the Celery Farm

Meet at the Greenway entrance to the Celery Farm at 6:30 p.m. Bring a light snack to enjoy while we wait for sunset. Leader: Mike Limatola. Please register for this trip with Mike, mike.limatola@gmail.com. Rain date is March 13, 2022.

Note: Date may change based on the arrival of the Woodcocks or the weather, please check Fyke emails for updates.



© Kathleen Farley

“Never miss an opportunity of noticing anything of beauty ...”

~Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nature and Walking

March 25, 2022, Friday – Monthly meeting: 8:00 p.m.

The Surprising NJ Connection to Birding in North Dakota, Juanita Hummel

North Dakota may well be the most under-rated birding destination in North America. While the first image that comes to mind is big skies and grasslands dotted with colorful wildflowers, the diverse habitat types in ND not only host prairie grassland birds but also



© Juanita Hummel

provide prime breeding territory for many species of waterfowl due to the fresh-water-filled “potholes” left behind after the last Ice Age. The long-legged Marbled Godwits that we strain to see through scopes in the winter at the Jersey shore can be seen with the naked eye strutting along roadways. Upland Sandpipers, rare and critically endangered in NJ due to habitat loss, thrive there, posing on fence posts for easy photos. This program is a brief introduction to the often-overlooked birds of North Dakota.

A retired lab scientist turned citizen scientist, Juanita is board president of the Washington Crossing Audubon Society, the central NJ chapter of the National Audubon Society. She's a certified PA Master Naturalist and a trained volunteer naturalist at Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve in PA. She holds bird and nature walks and enjoys eco-traveling to observe birds and plants in their native habitats around the world.

April 2, 2022, Saturday – Celery Farm Cleanup

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the end of Greenway for a few hours of active conservation. We hope you will join us to spruce up the preserve. Many hands make light work! Marsh Warden Mike Limatola is the coordinator, mike.limatola@gmail.com. Rain date is April 3, 2022.

The 68th Ramsey Christmas Bird Count

By Rob Fanning

This year's Christmas Bird Count, the milestone 70th Ramsey CBC, was held on December 18, 2021. It produced 79 species, plus 1 count week bird, making it a very respectable 80 species total.

The rainfall predicted was much less than anticipated, and with warm temps (into the mid-fifties) and little to no wind, this was one of the more comfortable CBCs this writer has experienced in approximately 30 years of participation.

While new no species were added to the cumulative, as expected, some very good birds were turned up by our stalwart teams, 8 teams totaling approx 25 participants. Some of the most notable finds were: BLUE-WINGED TEAL (Team E, only the 2nd in count history), AMERICAN KESTREL (Team D), VIRGINIA RAIL (Team G), WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (5 by Team F), and the declining RUSTY BLACKBIRD (1 each by Teams D and G). Considering it's not a winter finch flight year, 8 PURPLE FINCH and 4 RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH is respectable.

TEAMS C and D tied for the most species with 56 each, while the COVETED BLUE JAY AWARD went to Team B with 81, edging out Team H with 79. Team C finally lost their grip on the HOUSE SPARROW award, which also went to Team B with a whopping 160.

Species that were seen in good and/or above average numbers included:

RING-NECKED DUCK: 189
HOODED MERGANSER: 242
COM. MERGANSER: 1241
GREAT BLUE HERON: 28
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK: 4
BELTED KINGFISHER: 16
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: 47

N.FLICKER: 65
BROWN CREEPER: 10
RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET: 5
E.BLUEBIRD: 57
CEDAR WAXWING: 242
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER (28)
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (810)

Species that came in below average and/or poor numbers included:

WILD TURKEY: 13
TURKEY VULTURE: 3
BALD EAGLE: 10
ROCK PIGEON: 64
BC CHICKADEE: 79

WB NUTHATCH: 46
CAROLINA WREN: 42
MOCKINGBIRD: 14
HOUSE FINCH: 45
HOUSE SPARROW: 353

As always, a huge THANK YOU to all of our hard-working and dedicated participants for continuing this long-standing tradition and contributing to citizen science, especially in the current Covid landscape. Without you, there wouldn't be a count and valuable data. Co-compiler Lisa and myself would like to wish everyone a healthy and bird-filled 2022!

Gabrielle Schmidt honored by the Bergen County Audubon Society with one of the two the Harold Feinberg Conservation Awards for 2021.

The Harold Feinberg Conservation Award honors Harold Feinberg, a longtime BCAS member and field trip chairman. Harold was a mentor, an enthusiastic supporter of the BCAS endeavors, and always gave freely of his expertise with a combination of patience and knowledge that few possess.

Gaby Schmidt is one of the Deputy Marsh Wardens at the Celery Farm Nature Preserve and the First Vice President and the Conservation Chairperson for the Fyke Nature Association.

Gaby also is a long time Raptor Runner, delivering injured birds to The Raptor Trust for rehabilitation and bringing them back to where they were found for release into the wild. She volunteers once a week at The Raptor Trust, cleaning out cages and tending to injured birds.

A longtime volunteer at the Celery Farm Nature Preserve, Gaby does everything including planting native trees and flowers, picking invasive plants, cutting invasive vines, giving guided tours to scouts, and patrolling the area. She's a true environmental hero, working every day to help our environment, wildlife, and the people that love and depend on a healthy ecosystem for all to enjoy and thrive.

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!

2022 First Bird Of The Year

By Carol Flanagan

Many people noted a lack of birds at their feeders on New Year's Day. Was the weather to blame? Josie Bassett reported "I was hoping to report, as a first bird of the year, the owl I hear in the middle of the night, but I think all the fireworks going off here and there might have scared it away". Diane Rigg didn't see her first bird of the year until 1/2/2022 a Blue Jay.

My first was a predawn LBJ that hopped out from under a hedge, grabbed a peanut, and hopped back before I could ID it, I suspect it was a White-throated Sparrow. Once the sun came up, I was treated to a beautiful Downy Woodpecker, followed by two House Finches at my feeder.

Mourning Doves, eight, were the most frequently seen; followed by Blue Jays, six seen. Comments listed in no particular order.

Ivan Kossak: My first was Mourning Dove. I like to think this is a sign of peace for the new year. (Your editor hopes Ivan's comment is truth!)

Jim Wright: First birds were MODO and White-throated Sparrow simultaneously, couldn't get them in the same photo. Here's the MODO shot.



© Jim Wright

Valerie Maene: My firsts were all on the feeder, House Sparrows and one Starling. And on the ground 5 Mourning Doves. One House Finch on the thistle feeder. Five minutes later there was a Chickadee.

Alice Leurck: Mourning Dove

Patty Finn: Mourning Dove

Ann Plaisted: Six Mourning Doves. She actually wrote "morning" doves in appreciation of the time of day!

Tom Jaeger: I was hoping for something dramatic, but the birds and weather were not working with me! Two miles west of the Celery Farm all the birds were all hunkered down taking shelter but one! A Mourning Dove came to drink at a feeder.



© Tom Jaeger

Stephanie Seymour: My first bird heard, Blue Jay. My first bird seen, Mourning Dove.

Daniel Carola: A blue jay calling off my back deck in my new home in Ramsey.

Darlene Lembo: Blue Jay

Karen Chatten: The first bird I saw today was a Blue Jay, hopping down from some bare forsythia to the grass in my backyard. After searching for snacks, it flew up into a mature pine where it landed on a favorite branch overlooking my deck.

Patti Vernon: I heard a Blue Jay first then my first viewed bird was a male Red-bellied Woodpecker!

The most humorous was posted by John Workman: First bird of the year...Male Cardinal. On territory but not singing.



© Lisa Potash

Furthest away report, Mary Lane: Pink-sided Junco! Broomfield, CO.

Charley West: Female Cardinal on the ground, my back yard.

Doug Morel: My first bird of the year was House Sparrow...Woo Hoo!

Rob Fanning House Finch for me. Followed closely by Blue Jay and Song Sparrow.

Margery Cleveland: I saw a Junco at my thistle bird feeder.

Maryann and Bill Fahey: The first bird we saw was a Downy Woodpecker at our feeder.

Joe Koscielny: Black-capped Chickadee

Mike Limatola and Sue Dougherty: American Crow, on top of the sound barrier, eating something.

Gabriele Schmitt: First heard and then seen, Fish Crows. They've been around for about a week, making their presence known. Happy to report that there is a lot of activity in my yard and on my feeders: Hairy Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, MoDos, House Sparrows, Juncos, White Throats, Cardinals (though none as handsomely presented as John's indoor species).



© John Workman

Lisa Potash: Up a bit late, but on checking my nest box cams, first bird of the year Eastern Screech Owl (male). A close second his mate in the front box.

Mark Kantrowitz: White-throated Sparrow

Betty McDonnell: First bird of year is a Carolina Wren eating mealworms in feeder two feet from my window.

Hugh Carola: Sorry to say, 'twas a solo Starling on a wire here in drizzly Maywood.

Patricia Linard: My husband's first bird was a male Cardinal and mine was a Downy Woodpecker.

Becky Meister: Common Merganser

Lisa Ann Fanning: From the Deep South of Central NJ, my first bird was Carolina Chickadee.

Bill Drummond: My first bird early this morning was an American Crow.

Bob Thurston: Lady Gouldian finch-in my bird room. Cooper's Hawk in the horse corral.

Barbara Dilger: Excited to see the Hairy Woodpecker as my first! He shows up, but not that often.

Valerie Moore: 32 House Sparrows hanging out in the forsythia bush right outside our kitchen window. They can't hang out there in the summer because the House Wrens in and around the nesting box chase them away,

Monica Cardoza: White-breasted Nuthatch. Went to look at the feeders this a.m., and this guy swooped in dispensing every other bird there. I guess most birds don't mess with a Nuthatch.

Malcolm Chesworth: Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's)

Mimi Brauch: Carolina Wren

Amy Griffin: My first at the house was a Red-bellied Woodpecker, my first for birding was a Bald Eagle outside of Dekorte, Lyndhurst.

Jennifer and Michael Louie: Our first bird of the year was, *drum roll* my husband, Michael, and I spotted a pair of Red-breasted Merganser in the East River swimming along the shoreline in Long Island City, Queens, NYC this morning. It is a lifer for Michael!



© Jennifer and Michael Louie

Field and Feeder Notes

By Judith Cinquina

Not until spring is well advanced and really hot weather has come in its winter haunts does this tender warm-weather bird (Blue-winged Teal) decide to leave the sunny glades of Florida and the bayous of Louisiana, where it has spent the winter or early spring, dabbling in the shallow, muddy pools, and marshes.

~Bent, Arthur Cleveland; Life Histories of N. American Wild Fowl, Dover Ed.1962.

Unlike the Green-winged Teal, Blue-wings do not tolerate cold weather well, and so most leave NJ beginning in August and are out of here by mid-September. They winter primarily in Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Mexico, and Central America. As Bent wrote, they are a “tender” species. It is a rare event to spot one in December in our area, according to Boyle’s Birds of NJ (2011), which means Maryann Fahey’s Blue-winged sighting on Schlegel Lake, Washington Township on November 29 was unusual. Rarer still was the Blue-winged Lisa Potash spotted January 5 on Barbour Pond in Wayne. If you have ever watched a Blue-winged take flight, you know they don’t have to run on the water like a Common Loon or merganser. Bent writes, “From the water the Blue-winged Teal springs into the air with surprising agility, and when under way is one of the swiftest of ducks in flight; it has been credited with attaining a speed of 90, 100, or even 130 miles an hour...” Bent admits this is probably an exaggeration, but they are fast and can fly long distances. One individual banded in Alberta was shot in Venezuela a month later. That’s rather impressive. Blue-winged Teal prefer small ponds, ditches, and puddles where they can sieve tiny prey and seeds from the surface or mud. Hopefully, before their respective shallow pools froze over, Maryann’s and Lisa’s teals jumped into the air and fled south.

Doug Morel found “a late migrant” Vesper Sparrow, in Westwood, December 13. Boyle states that the “small number” of fall Vespers are usually encountered in October and November, like the three Doug found at Crestwood Lake in Allendale, October 22, or the three I noted keeping company with Lincoln’s and other sparrows in a weedy dumpsite at Parsons Pond, Franklin Lakes that same day. But Doug’s December Vesper was rare. Also unusual were lingering American Pipits wandering around the Pump House at Halifax in Mahwah between January 8 and 12 with at least two logged by Brian Kenney on the 9th. Boyle calls them a “scarce and uncommon” winter resident, and that’s primarily along our coast.

An Eastern Phoebe is a common example of an out-of-season species that pops up occasionally. One was seen by many observers around Lake Henry at Halifax in January. It probably isn’t a happy camper with the freezing temperatures we’re having in mid-January. However, Phoebes can survive on fruit, and Halifax did have a lot of poison ivy and other berries available in January. Boyle does point out that Phoebes usually don’t survive an entire winter. Catbirds, another species uncommon in winter in Northern New Jersey, were also noted at Halifax, and Lisa had one at Barbour Pond. If this winter were like our last two, both species might make it through the winter, but this winter seems rather old-fashioned and brutal.

A surprise find was a White Ibis found in Woodcliff Lake, October 25. Wiebke Hinsch was working outside her home across from the lake when a NJ DEP agent stopped and said he saw a strange bird on the shore. Wiebke crossed Pascack Road with the agent and discovered it was a young White Ibis. Boyle states that young White Ibises tend to wander. They are much more expected in south Jersey, but the sighting was not unprecedented. In September 2011, another immature was enjoyed by many birders including Doug Morel and Rob Fanning at

Silver Lake in Park Ridge. And Valerie Maene recounted that in July 1985, three immature White Ibises spent a week in the Goffle Brook in Hawthorne.

Aggressive cormorant behavior is expected during breeding season, but the two Double-crested Cormorants seen by the Hour on the Tower crew October 31 were not breeding. Charley West reported the two had an “animated, face-to-face dispute.” What set it off is unknown, but Alan Pomeranz captured the argument in a wonderful photo showing one coming in for the attack, wings over back, bill wide open and threatening. The second only had its snake-like neck out of the water with its bill wide open in reciprocal threat. Most likely there was a lot of hissing insults flung back and forth.



© Alan Pomeranz

It is amazing how ho-hum sightings of local Cooper’s Hawks have become. They used to cause much excitement, almost as much as an eagle. Not only have they adapted to suburbia in the last century, they now take advantage of our feeding stations for dinner reservations. Robert Thurston posted a photo of a Coop on prey, probably a large woodpecker, under his Allendale feeder, December 12. Coops prefer medium-sized birds, especially Blue Jays, thrushes, and N. Flickers that are slower and easier to catch. Merlins are also becoming more common; although, unlike the Coop, they haven’t settled down to nest this far south yet. Winter sightings have increased considerably since the 1980’s. Tom Mitchell snapped a photo of one perched at the Celery Farm (CF), October 31. Doug Morel reported a Merlin in Westwood, December 13 and on the 19th, the Tower Crew considered a fly-over Merlin the Bird of the Day. And what about those Golden Eagles migrating over us in the fall? Are they nesting just north of us? Where are they coming from? Hook Mountain counted 14 this fall. Closer to home, Stephanie Seymour bagged 6 from her Ringwood deck where she conducts a fall count, and she managed to photograph every one.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are always a treat. Although most females winter south of us, males will stay here, even young males. One was at the CF, October 31 and photographed by Tom Mitchell, October 31. Mike Limatola photographed another at the Fell House in Allendale. Janet Tercheck’s Christmas Bird Count team tallied five Sapsuckers around Ramsey, December 16, and Gaby Schmitt had one visit her suet feeder in Bergenfield, on the 13th. They blend in so well with the tree trunks that they’re easily overlooked. Gaby wrote that she would not have seen him if he hadn’t had a “rather noisy dispute” with a Downy. Two branches came down in her yard, and she detected “many lines of holes” in the branches. The holes are their wells that they excavate for sap that provides them with sweet energy. Every line of wells is perfectly straight and each well equally spaced as if the sapsucker used a ruler.

The Tower crew had a few interesting singles that deserve mention. An Eastern Meadowlark was a “fly-by” on November 14. It was a late migrant and didn’t stop. Next was the Golden-crowned Kinglet that competed for the Bird of the Day award but didn’t win, December 19, and the day after Christmas brought a Brown Creeper as the last bird of the hour. One explored a venerable oak in my Upper Saddle River yard, January 3. It’s been around off and on all fall. I’m hoping it stays until at least March so I can hear it sing. Brown Creepers have the prettiest, warbler-like song that is so welcome at the end of winter. The only Red-breasted Nuthatch report came from Jim Wright who photographed one at his Allendale feeder, November 25.

The CF is once again supporting a Virginia Rail this winter. Neil MacLennan reported it there, January 5. He also noted a C. Goldeneye at Halifax December 16 and Doug Morel noted a male at Mary Patrick Park in Mahwah, January 8. Goldeneyes are a hardy species and migrate late, but most spend the winter along the coast, especially north of NJ. They often can be found wintering at Sandy Hook. The Snowy Egret Doug observed in flight over DeKorte November 9 should have been out of our area by the end of October.

Michael Sterling photographed a male Pileated at the CF, December 12. He wondered why both the pair at the CF and the pair near his Ridgewood home disappeared over the summer. Pileateds are large woodpeckers who require large territories, at least five miles square. Sometimes you will see this species often, sometimes for a few years in one area, and then they seem to disappear, but they don't migrate. They simply move to another area of their territory where they haven't hunted for some time. They're very dependent on large old trees for nesting and rotting logs and trees for food. Wood dwelling ants and beetle larvae are their primary food. They also excavate many cavities for roosting or nesting that are used by other species like Wood Ducks and Barred Owls.



© Michael Sterling

Keep alert in March for the Brown Creepers song. Most of the birds mentioned in this column were either late or rare migrants, but we're interested in all the birds you encounter. Please keep your feeders clean and share your observations with us all. 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.

Land Conservation: The Fyke Role

By Kurt Muenz

I was unaware of Fyke involvement in saving land aside from Campgaw and the Celery Farm, until I became Treasurer early in 2017. While reviewing income and expenditures of the previous year I came across a ledger entry showing \$250,000 deposited in our checking account only to see it withdrawn the next day. This turned out to be a "pass-through" of funds from New Jersey Green Acres a state agency to the Land Conservancy of New Jersey (TLC), a non-profit devoted to land conservation acquisitions.

Green Acres provides funds to municipalities and non-profit charities to be used in preserving open space for environmental conservation, recreation, or historic purposes. As a qualified non-profit, Fyke can receive Green Acres grants provided we are associated with projects that meet their standards and subject to Green Acres approving detailed plans for acquiring and developing the site. Thus, we've several times partnered with other non-profits who specialize in conservation land acquisition whereby Green Acres funds awarded to Fyke provided a portion of the money needed to buy the land.

For some years TLC has been targeting privately owned undeveloped land in Mahwah. They wish to buy and preserve such sites with the objective of creating a green corridor with a hiking trail network to run north from Ramapo Valley County Reservation. TLC refers to land so acquired as the Ramapo Mountain Reserve.

The above-mentioned transfer of Green Acres grant money by Fyke helped fund the purchase of a 46-acre tract which became part of the Reserve. Similar grants to TLC and to the

NY/NJ Trail Conference were also used and the total of all three grants was matched by the Bergen County Open Space Trust Fund. For more about this purchase and about TLC's Ramapo campaign, go to

<https://www.northjersey.com/story/news/environment/2016/06/01/preservationists-buy-46-acres-in-mahwah/94745386/>

After this successful collaboration, early in 2017 TLC urged and assisted Fyke in applying to Green Acres for an added allotment of funds to be used for future Ramapo Mountain purchases. Green Acres approved this in June of that year pending a specific purchase.

It wasn't until September 2020 that TLC proposed we again collaborate on a purchase that would utilize a little under half of Fyke's 2017 allotment. It was for a 9.68-acre plot TLC had already contracted to buy. Bergen County would again provide matching funds.

The tract is shown outlined in yellow on this satellite map. (A portion of the land acquired in 2016 is outlined in white.)



Quoting from a description provided by TLC:

"The property is located in the Highlands Preservation Area. The parcel consists of very mature deciduous forest habitat, containing several specimen trees...Below...are steep slopes extending down to the highway. Along the northern section of the property... the grade is steep enough to be considered a bluff. There are wonderful views of northern New Jersey from most of the property, and the property contains at least one spring where water bubbles up from the ground through the rocks."

After Fyke signed a written agreement agreeing to participate in this latest acquisition, TLC put it on the back burner while they dealt with more pressing matters. It wasn't till well into 2021 that the project got reactivated. At the end of July Fyke signed the necessary Green Acres Project Agreement. Then in September we formally became a party to the contract between TLC and the previous owners of the property as required. Shortly thereafter the sale was closed on Sept. 30, 2021.

Fyke's duties included issuing written resolutions confirming our Board's approval of the arrangement, to both TLC and Green Acres. I reviewed the various agreements, negotiating some wording changes for one of them, and other required documents prior to President Mike Limatola signing them. The two of us handled communications with TLC and Green Acres. At the end, I deposited a Green Acres' check for \$122,500 and very soon thereafter issued a Fyke check to TLC for the same amount.

The major effort of course, was by the experienced professionals of TLC. They prepared and transmitted all the maps, development plans and other documents per Green Acres' rules. Though Fyke was the junior partner, there's a good feeling in realizing that we contributed to an important conservation endeavor, especially in these times of declining habitat. All of us can take pride in being members of an Association that does this.

Mount Peter 2021

By Judith Cinquina

Except for a curious Black Bear and an unprecedented invasion of Turkey Vultures, Mount Peter's 64th annual fall watch provided few surprises. Eleven volunteers manned our 71-day count for 472 hours, September 1 through November 15 and produced 10,120 migrants, primarily Broad-winged Hawks, resulting in a very average 21.44 hawks per hour.



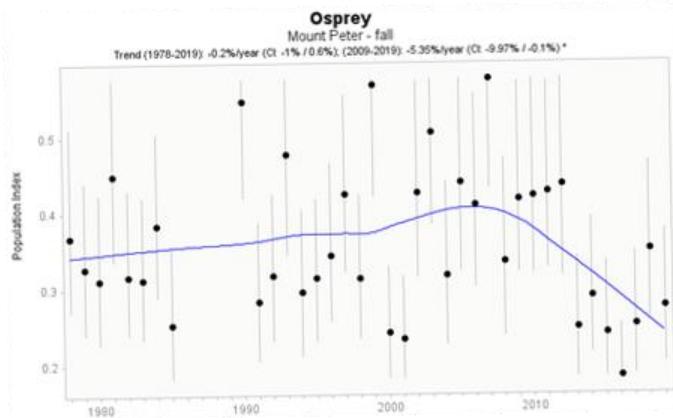
Our most abundant migrant, the Broad-winged Hawk awarded leader Will Test our only four-digit day, September 19. The 3,888 he recorded appeared in "huge" distant kettles, resembling swarms of gnats on light NNE winds. Most began moving at 10 a.m. EST and continued through the nine-hour day, peaking with 1,502 between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. The next morning, Elisabeth McGrath and Ken Witkowski mopped up leftovers, netting 991 more, and then things quieted down. Red-shouldered Hawks came in under their 10-year average at 119: 56 adult, 17 immature, 46 undetermined. Although our watch was extended into November in the '80's, it wasn't until 2012 Red-shoulders topped 100 or above at our lookout. Our all-time record was set only four years ago when 213 took advantage of strong NW winds. Red-tailed Hawks failed to show up this season, coming in 14% below our 10-year average and well below our record 905 set in 2003. Our final tally of 113 was the lowest since 1980 when the count was extended into November. It is concerning, but history has taught us that this species moves on strong NW winds which 2021 failed to produce. Our two best days garnered a mere 13 apiece, November 1 and 10.

Since scoring a record 2,440 Sharp-shinned Hawks in 1986, our 10-year average for this small accipiter has dropped 34%. Only 871 showed up this season, one of seven of our counts under 1,000 since 1978 when our watch expanded into October. Our count mirrors a decline of Sharpies across the Northeast. One explanation, according to Trudy Battaly, Editor of the North East Hawk Watch Journal, may be a decline in songbirds, an important food source for Sharpies. Sharpie numbers may be going down but the larger Cooper's Hawk numbers are up. This season's 114 tied their current 10-year average and is a 119% increase over the 52 averaged in the 1980's. Their larger cousin, the N. Goshawk failed to make an appearance for the third straight season.

Are American Kestrels on a new, positive trajectory? For the second consecutive fall, their numbers held above the 100 mark at 125: 14 male, 25 female, and 86 unknown. Most were too high or far out to sex. The 10-year average of this little falcon has plunged 133% since the 1970's. Ken Witkowski scored the best day with 30 on WNW winds, September 30. To put that in perspective, our best day in our 64-year history was September 11, 1965, when 210 Kestrels moved through along with hundreds of dragonflies, a favorite food. Any migrant Merlin or Peregrine Falcon is considered a gift at our lookout. Although both produced below average counts, the 8 Merlin and 11 Peregrines were welcome treats.

The last three fall watches brought us the best Bald Eagle numbers in our 64-year watch. A good tally of 140 was noted this fall: 62 adult, 76 immature and 2 undetermined, although it doesn't beat last year's record 177. Will Test claimed the best day with 11 that went through with the Broad-wings, September 19. Golden Eagles showed well across the Northeast this season. Between October 19 and November 6, we recorded four Golden Eagles: 1 adult and 3 immature, all on northwest winds. Our record stands at 12 Goldens in 1994. For the 13th consecutive

season, Osprey came in below their 10-year average with 122 recorded. Beverly Robertson nailed the best day with 22, September 12, on light northwest winds.

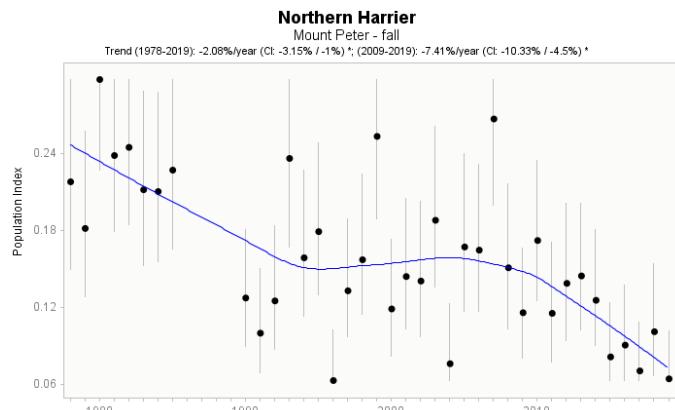


Like the beleaguered Kestrel, the

Mirroring lookouts across the Northeast, in 1990 Mount Peter recorded 234 Osprey, our all-time record, but numbers have been on a slow downhill trend the last 10 years. So far, the cause remains a mystery.

Charts from RPI

N. Harrier has declined so much from the 101 seen in 1980 that any slight improvement elicits cheers. The 46 Harriers counted this fall was above the 10-year average: 5 male, 7 female, 14 immature and 20 unknown. Two male Harriers helped draw the curtain on our 2021 watch, on November 15. Leader Bill O'Keefe spotted the two pearl-gray males flying south ahead of an approaching snow shower, as our 2021 watch drew to a close.



Vultures have always been a problem for our leaders. Both species are constantly around, perching on the microwave towers in front of us and hunting the farm fields below. Last season reinforced the fact that some of our vultures do migrate when an unbroken stream of 175 Turkey Vultures went over in one hour, October 27 and pushed our final tally to a record 850. This year the big Turkey Vulture event occurred, October 23. Just as things were getting boring, hundreds of dark specks were spotted in the distance. Leader Jeanne Cimorelli described it as "a tremendous, single-event stream of 851 Turkey Vultures beginning at 2:55 P.M. EST and lasting 45 minutes as birds streamed and kettled out over the valley west of the platform. At its peak, there were three kettles of varying sizes with streaming birds to either side and more birds coming in from the north." The last of them shifted southeast right over the platform. "It was just beautiful to watch," Jeanne wrote. Black Vultures came in under their 10-year average with 77. But, like all our vultures, they're difficult to count and always hanging around.

Although local Ravens entertain us daily, Tom Millard observed two migrating south, October 7. That same day, he was alone, scanning the sky when he looked down and was startled to find a Black Bear directly below the platform. "He looked around for a minute," Tom wrote, "and went back into the woods." Ruby-throated Hummingbirds totaled a very average 21 in September. Our record is 45 in 2013. Monarchs migrate in almost any weather with a healthy 1,152 counted through October 27. We counted 4,075 Canada Geese with Denise Farrell topping

counts with 1,061 on October 18 and 1,314 on the 27th. Rick Hansen scored 120 Brant, October 22, and Tom Millard noted the only Snow Geese with 20, November 11.

Other birds of interest included: Common Nighthawks September 12 and 14; Great Egrets on September 27 and October 23; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker from October 24 through November 6; Red-breasted Nuthatch singles from September 7 through November 7; and Purple Finch migrants daily between October 23 and November 14.

Thanks to our very dedicated and enthusiastic volunteer crew who put in 472 hours, sometimes without company, and made this report possible. We're very grateful to Tom Millard for repairs on the platform and installing and taking down our platform box and to Bill O'Keefe for painting over the graffiti. Many visitors benefited from the informative posters created by Denise Farrell. Kudos to our clean-up crew, Denise, Tom, Bill, Rick Hansen, Tom Mitchell, and Will Test who picked up trash and cut back weeds and small trees. Finally, we are indebted to the Fyke Nature Association for their continued support and sponsorship and to all those who have supported our site on Hawkcount.org. Check out our new Raptor Population Index charts on www.hawkcount.org. They're full of information. This immature Golden Eagle was photographed by Matt Zeitler on the watch November 6.

As always, we remain the oldest continually run, all-volunteer watch in the country.



| 2021 FALL HAWK WATCH RESULTS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----|-------|-----|-----|-----|-------|-----|----|-----|-------|-----|----|----|-----|----|----|--------|-----|--|
| WATCH | BV | TV | OS | BE | NH | SS | CH | NG | RS | BW | RT | RL | GE | AK | ML | PG | TOTAL | HRS | |
| HOOK MT. | 180 | 1,330 | 383 | 209 | 137 | 1,800 | 350 | 0 | 337 | 1,069 | 104 | 0 | 14 | 209 | 78 | 37 | 6,343 | 482 | |
| STATE LINE | 63 | 3,387 | 477 | 319 | 84 | 1,426 | 361 | 0 | 309 | 917 | 255 | 0 | 3 | 489 | 71 | 70 | 8,241 | 483 | |
| MONTCLAIR | 82 | 1,957 | 217 | 188 | 61 | 828 | 421 | 1 | 325 | 913 | 190 | 0 | 0 | 270 | 73 | 62 | 5,609 | 580 | |
| PURPLE CHICK | 17 | 313 | 48 | 66 | 37 | 491 | 186 | 0 | 114 | 1,759 | 58 | 0 | 6 | 115 | 21 | 14 | 3,315 | 303 | |
| MOUNT PETER | 77 | 1,582 | 122 | 140 | 46 | 871 | 114 | 0 | 119 | 6,769 | 113 | 0 | 4 | 125 | 8 | 11 | 10,120 | 472 | |



Observers scan the sky for migrating raptors from the viewing platform at Mount Peter Hawkwatch. Photo by Matt Zeitler

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

| <u>SPECIES</u> | <u>2011</u> | <u>2012</u> | <u>2013</u> | <u>2014</u> | <u>2015</u> | <u>2016</u> | <u>2017</u> | <u>2018</u> | <u>2019</u> | <u>2020</u> | <u>2021</u> |
|---------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
| Black Vulture | 38 | 4 | 104 | 232 | 107 | 84 | 96 | 79 | 136 | 109 | 77 |
| Turkey Vulture | 221 | 112 | 121 | 570 | 292 | 337 | 320 | 504 | 426 | 850 | 1,582 |
| Osprey | 187 | 191 | 126 | 111 | 114 | 98 | 111 | 134 | 123 | 121 | 122 |
| Bald Eagle | 70 | 130 | 119 | 79 | 70 | 95 | 85 | 112 | 163 | 177 | 140 |
| N. Harrier | 41 | 47 | 51 | 46 | 28 | 35 | 26 | 35 | 27 | 42 | 46 |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk | 1,334 | 1,826 | 1,026 | 1,119 | 1,017 | 1,104 | 841 | 1,469 | 693 | 1,048 | 871 |
| Cooper's Hawk | 152 | 165 | 64 | 122 | 74 | 94 | 121 | 176 | 82 | 85 | 114 |
| N. Goshawk | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | 94 | 131 | 118 | 136 | 85 | 104 | 122 | 213 | 203 | 149 | 119 |
| Broad-winged Hawk | 7,417 | 6,073 | 7,611 | 5,685 | 11,256 | 5,894 | 6,874 | 5,071 | 7,360 | 3,865 | 6,769 |
| Red-tailed Hawk | 248 | 437 | 582 | 658 | 289 | 478 | 232 | 508 | 443 | 465 | 113 |
| Rough-legged Hawk | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Golden Eagle | 4 | 3 | 5 | 10 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 9 | 1 | 4 |
| American Kestrel | 153 | 232 | 112 | 139 | 75 | 52 | 83 | 159 | 85 | 121 | 125 |
| Merlin | 25 | 23 | 14 | 23 | 24 | 15 | 18 | 15 | 8 | 20 | 8 |
| Peregrine Falcon | 18 | 20 | 15 | 12 | 11 | 13 | 26 | 23 | 14 | 13 | 11 |
| Unidentified Eagle | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Unidentified Raptor | 61 | 68 | 37 | 69 | 33 | 42 | 8 | 18 | 28 | 30 | 17 |
| GRAND TOTAL | 10,065 | 9,463 | 10,105 | 9,012 | 13,481 | 8,448 | 8,996 | 8,529 | 9,800 | 7,095 | 10,120 |
| TOTAL HOURS | 411 | 413 | 480 | 468 | 480 | 488 | 480 | 418 | 479 | 453 | 472 |
| RAPTOR/HOUR | 24.49 | 22.91 | 21.05 | 19.26 | 28.09 | 17.31 | 18.75 | 20.40 | 20.45 | 15.67 | 21.44 |

MOUNT PETER FALL HAWKS: 2011-2020 10-YEAR AVERAGE

| | <u>BV</u> | <u>IV</u> | <u>OS</u> | <u>BE</u> | <u>NH</u> | <u>SS</u> | <u>CH</u> | <u>NG</u> | <u>RS</u> | <u>BW</u> | <u>RT</u> | <u>RL</u> | <u>GE</u> | <u>AK</u> | <u>ML</u> | <u>PG</u> | <u>TOTAL</u> | <u>HRS</u> | <u>HWKS/HR</u> |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------------|------------|----------------|
| 10-Year Avg. | 99 | 375 | 132 | 110 | 38 | 1,148 | 114 | 1 | 136 | 6,711 | 434 | 0 | 5 | 121 | 19 | 17 | 9,499 | 457 | 22.41 |
| Total 2021 | 77 | 1,582 | 122 | 140 | 46 | 871 | 114 | 0 | 119 | 6,769 | 113 | 0 | 4 | 125 | 8 | 11 | 10,120 | 472 | 21.44 |

Welcome New Members

Jeffrey Dugal, Family Membership, Allendale
Thomas Jaeger, Waldwick



Fyke Board of Trustees:

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| President: | Mike Limatola |
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| Hawk Watch: | Judith Cinquina |
| Newsletter: | Carol Flanagan |
| Programs: | Monica Cardoza |
| Publicity: | |
| Webmasters: | Kevin Watson |
| | Tom Mitchell |

The Fyke Nature Association, a 501 (c) (3) organization, meets eight times a year.
The meeting dates for 2022, all are Fridays:

February 25, 2022
March 25, 2022
April 22, 2022
May 20, 2022
June - no meeting
July - no meeting

August - no meeting
September 23, 2022
October 28, 2022
November - no meeting
December 2, 2022

Meetings and membership are open to all. Annual dues: \$20 for an individual and \$25 for a family. 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.
The deadline for the Summer 2022 issue is March 23, 2022. Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to carolflana@aol.com.

