



Fyke Nature Association Winter Newsletter

Vol. 68 – No. 4 – 2022

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.

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.

December 2, 2022, Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Members Night 2022, Kurt Muenz

Fyke member photographers will be sharing quality nature related images with the audience. We plan to record these programs beforehand for projection at the meeting. This will enable seeing and hearing the presenters without their masks on. Over the years we've been treated to many beautiful and interesting pictures especially enjoyable when seen on the big screen. So please come and see what's in store this year. A video recording posted online some time afterwards, is also planned. Photographers able to share are urged to promptly contact Kurt, elkumu@aceweb.com.



December 17, 2022, Saturday – Christmas Bird Count Co-compilers Lisa and Rob Fanning.

The 71st annual Ramsey Christmas Bird Count (CBC) will be held Saturday, December 17, 2022 as part of Audubon's 123rd CBC. 8 separate team circles will combine to 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 most of the day, with some teams also looking/listening for owls, counting every bird in each of those areas to help identify trends in species. Some teams will be in search of nocturnal birds.



**"Every leaf speaks bliss to me, fluttering from the autumn tree."
~ Emily Bronte**

January 27, 2023, Friday -- Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building
African Safari: Birds and Mammals, Kevin Watson

This presentation will be live. It will also be videotaped. The resulting video will be posted on YouTube with a link provided to all members for whom we have an email. Those who missed the meeting can view it at home at their convenience.

Birder and photographer Kevin Watson returns with a program about the incredible wildlife in Africa. This will be a highlights show, with Kevin's best images from visits to three countries, Zambia, Kenya and Uganda. There will be the iconic African animals—lions, leopards, elephants, giraffes, hippos and more. But Africa is also home to an amazing variety of bird life, and Kevin will present images of many of the star attractions, including Hornbills, Bee-eaters, Turacos, Owls, Eagles and the prehistoric-looking Shoebill.

Kevin Watson is a local birder and photographer, and these two interests have taken him all over the world. He has visited over 40 countries and has created many entertaining programs about these exotic destinations. He and nature writer Jim Wright are co-authors of the coffee-table book "Hawk Mountain: The World's First Raptor Sanctuary" about the world-famous hawk-watching site in Pennsylvania, and his photographs have appeared in many local and national magazines. An introduced species from the British Isles, he has been able to adapt to the harsh environment of Bergen County but is not considered "countable" by the ABA.



Field and Feeder Notes
By Judith Cinquina

The Stilt Sandpiper has been known to devour a frog—inadvertently perhaps, for according to the account, it stood about for some time afterward, looking stunned. This species, in company with the Wilson's Phalarope...commonly swings its bill back and forth through the water, straining out its bits of food in a motion known as side-sweeping; to make this technique more effective, the bill of the Stilt Sandpiper has become slightly broadened at the tip. At other times, the Stilt Sandpiper pauses tensely with its bill deep in the sand, as if that member had been seized by some small humorist below.

From *The Wind Birds* by Peter Matthiessen, Viking Press, 1973

Every year, the Celery Farm (CF) attracts a few shorebirds, primarily yellowlegs, peep, and Spotted and Solitary Sandpipers. But this summer's prolonged drought produced extensive mudflats at the CF and attracted 14 sandpiper species between July and early September. "They were the best shorebirds I've seen there in over 20 years," Fred Weber reported. On August 23, Fred put out the alert that he had found a Stilt Sandpiper in with Solitary, Lesser Yellowlegs, Semipalmated, and 120 Least sandpipers. For some Fyke members, the Stilt was a life bird. Boyle in his *Birds of NJ* (2011) states it's "very rare" inland. This was the CF's second Stilt record. The first was seen by Rob Fanning on August 25, 1998. Nicholas Sweatlock described it as "Larger than Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers near it but smaller than Lesser Yellowlegs." Pale gray with a prominent white eyebrow and rather long black bill, it had long greenish legs and flashed a white rump in flight. Fortunately, it was not a one-day wonder. It or another was seen again on August 30, 31 and September 5. Tom Mitchell knew that the Stilt was usually feeding in the nearside shallow water in front of the Pirie/Mayhood platform, so on September 30, he climbed the platform. "By standing on the seat we were able to peer over the top of the tall phragmites and there it was!" Tom wrote. He also managed a good photo.



© Tom Mitchell

Fred wasn't done with his shorebird alerts. On September 1, he discovered a Wilson's Phalarope on the mudflats. It was a very conspicuous as it hunted, tail end high, flashing its white underparts as it picked at the mud with a needle-like black bill. "The Wilson's Phalarope, despite its structure, is a fresh-water species that spends more time ashore than on the water..."



© Bob Kane

from Matthiessen, *Wind Birds*. Boyle states that this species migrates through the Great Plains, both spring and fall, and states that few make it to the East Coast. Once again, however, this was not a CF first. Bob Kane wrote that he was standing on the Pirie/Mayhood platform, May 6, 2010, "when Rob spotted two dots in the sky and yelled, Wilson's Phalaropes!" Bob continued, "Without time to adjust camera settings, I got two 'usable' shots at long distance and processed more than Velveeta." His photo captures a male and female in flight. In addition to the CF rarities, Doug Morel added a White-rumped Sandpiper to the list on September 1 and a Western on the 5th.

Other big excitement occurred at Crestwood Lake in Allendale on October 11. Lisa Potash spotted a rare Henslow's Sparrow there along the phragmites that rim the drained lake. The Henslow's stood out, she wrote, because of its small size and "rufous backside."



© Lisa Potash

It's a short-tailed and flat-headed sparrow, a bit smaller than a Chipping, with an olive-tinged head and white eyerings. It's considered an Endangered Species in NJ. They used to nest throughout NJ in neglected grassy fields but have declined drastically since the 1960's. eBird lists it as the only Bergen County sighting recorded, but some birders have mentioned one from 1992 and another from 1985. Lisa also had a rare Vesper Sparrow that same day. It, too, bred in grassy fields in NJ before urbanization in the mid 1900's. And speaking of grassland species, Bobolinks also have declined drastically as a nesting species in NJ, but they do pass through on migration. Charley West reported that the Hour on the Tower crew spotted a flock of Bobolinks heading south on September 25.

Connecticut Warblers are a difficult species to find in the fall. They forage on or near the ground in brushy areas, and to make matters worse, they aren't particularly active. So,

congratulations to Fred for actually finding one at the CF, September 15. This Connecticut however posed feet away for Fred, on a branch, and turned this way and that for five minutes. Fred stated it was the best look he has ever had in his long birding career. Sibley describes this warbler as “thrush-like.” On the 19th, Loren Anderson found another Connecticut at Halifax. She snapped a photo of the drab bird with white eyering, grayish hood and bicolor bill, half hidden in foliage before it disappeared.

A CF Wood Thrush found by Brian Kenney, October 11 was noted on the Bergen County Rare Bird Alert (RBA). Even though many nest north of us and some nest in NJ, Boyle states that they are “uncommon as migrants.” Maryann Fahey also made the RBA with a late Ruby-throated Hummingbird in her Washington Township yard October 5 and 6. It was “feeding on cannas flowers,” she wrote. Evidently, this species has recently begun “lingering through October and even into December,” Boyle states. A Pine Warbler surprised Tom Mitchell in Allendale, October 3, when it turned up on his suet feeder. Pines are known to visit feeders, especially in the early spring when insects are few. Tom noted a Purple Finch and a small flycatcher in his yard that same day. The flycatcher had a partial white eyering and may have been one of the confusing Empidonax clan that are difficult to identify during migration, unless they sing.

Neil MacLennan discovered the local Red-shouldered Hawk pair perched on a snag in the CF’s Bajor Woods, September 13. One or another was seen off and on all fall at the CF. Cooper’s Hawks were also there almost daily. On September 31, Lisa Potash observed three Coops at the CF. She wrote, “Two appeared to be aggressively engaged in a fight.” Nicholas Sweatlock noted a Peregrine Falcon at the CF, September 1. On the 2nd, the Peregrine repeatedly flushed all the sandpipers, playing havoc with birders trying to identify what was present. Showing off its powerful flight maneuvers, the falcon dove through and up under the pipers, but didn’t snag anything. A lone Spotted Sandpiper played it cool, refused to flush and hunkered down where it was. Evidently, word got out to another Peregrine who showed up to hunt the CF. Charley’s Tower crew observed the pair on September 11. “Lake Appert was bank full again, and most of the mudflats and the itinerant pipers were gone, leaving slim-pickens for the two on-site Peregrines.” Charley noted.

Nighthawks are not raptors but got their name from hawking insects. Jim Wright saw some around the CF in early to mid-September. On September 9, Tom Mitchell found two in with Chimney Swifts over the George Washington Middle School in Ridgewood. He was there to watch the Chimney Swifts drop into the Middle School’s chimney. A link to a two-minute YouTube video he took of the Swifts going into the chimney is here: <https://youtu.be/3zRgMLlQLYQ>. Kurt Muenz estimated that 300 Chimney Swifts dropped into the school’s chimney, that night. John Workman provided a bit of Swift history, stating that the Washington School’s chimney at one time supported the largest Chimney Swift roost in the state. I believe Boyle refers to the school when he writes: “They often form large roosts in August and September, such as the annual gathering of up to 4,000 at a school in Ridgewood...before departing for South America.” Kurt has been keeping records of Swift numbers using the school’s chimney each fall. The largest count he entered into eBird was 3,030, October 2, 2010. Kurt’s data goes back to 2007.

Charley West believed they recorded a record 42 species during the Hour on the Tower count September 22. Julie McCall did a bit of research and corrected the record. She found a typing list of 42 the Tower crew posted on October 10, 2016. Seven warblers make the Tower count on the 22nd, with a Wilson’s the most coveted. Wilson’s is a bright yellow warbler that could be mistaken for a Yellow, but most Yellow Warblers migrate a bit earlier in the fall. An

adult male is easily identified by his black crown patch, but crowns of females and young can range from no black to speckled, olive or half black. Black crown patches of some pairs may even overlap. In *Wood Warblers' World* (1984), Hal Harrison wrote that on one pair he studied in Maine, both the male and female had round black caps. He stated, "I have found this typical of eastern Wilson's Warblers." Care should be taken when assigning sex to this species. That same day, Doug Morel scored a Wilson's at Halifax in Mahwah.

Two or three Winter Wrens shared the honor of Bird of the Day for the Tower crew, October 16. Boyle states that their fall migration peaks in mid—to late October "when these shy birds are most often detected by their call note." They sometimes turn up on our Christmas Bird Count. And speaking of winter, the over-wintering White-throated Sparrows arrived on September 29 in Montvale, along with hundreds of grackles, Laurie Neu reported.

What remains of fall can still produce some interesting sparrows and hawks, and maybe a Purple Finch. Let us know what you find out there. If you're feeding birds this winter, be sure to keep your feeders clean and help keep our feeder visitors healthy. 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.

Holiday Shopping?

If you are doing your online holiday shopping on Amazon, Please DO NOT use Amazon Smile, use the link on the Fyke 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 "Amazon". Every month Amazon sends us a sales commission check.

The Smile program only contributes 0.5% to Fyke. The affiliate program contributes 1% to 10% depending on the items purchased.

Thank you for your participation!

Dues Reminder

Thank you to those who have paid their dues for September 2022 thru August 2023. If you have not yet sent your dues, 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. **Annual dues are \$20 for an individual and \$25 for a family.**



The Big Sit! 2021
By Carol Flanagan

Thanks to all the members of our team, the Celery Stalkers, who participated our 26th Big Sit! on October 9, 2022. 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 50 species. We did not add any new species this year, so our cumulative total remains at 132 species.

Thank you to our Participants:

Sue Dougherty, Bill Drummond, Mike Limatola, Tom Jaeger, Julie McCall, Doug Morel, Alan Pomerantz, Gaby Schmitt, Nick Sweatlock, and Charley West

Species list:

Canada Goose
Wood Duck
Mallard
Green-winged Teal
Mourning Dove
Chimney Swift
Killdeer
Ring-billed Gull
Double-crested Cormorant
Great Blue Heron
Great Egret
Turkey Vulture
Sharp-shinned Hawk
Cooper's Hawk
Red-shouldered Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
Great Horned Owl

Belted Kingfisher
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Downy Woodpecker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker
American Kestrel
Eastern Phoebe
Blue-headed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Fish Crow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tree Swallow
Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Golden-crowned Kinglet
White-breasted Nuthatch
European Starling

Gray Catbird
American Robin
Cedar Waxwing
House Finch
Purple Finch
American Goldfinch
Dark-eyed Junco
White-throated Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Swamp Sparrow
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Tennessee Warbler
Common Yellowthroat
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Northern Cardinal



Welcome New Members

Robert Atkinson, Family membership, Wyckoff
Susan Salant, Monsey, New York



Fyke Board of Trustees:

President: Mike Limatola
 First Vice President: Gabriele Schmitt
 Second Vice President: open
 Treasurer: Kurt Muenz
 Recording Secretary: Molly Gardener
 Corresponding Secretary: Mimi Brauch
 Trustees: Sue Dougherty
 Darlene Lembo
 Doug Morel

Chairpersons:

Celery Farm: Stiles Thomas
 Mike Limatola
 Gabriele Schmitt
 Fred Weber
 Jim Wright
 Conservation: Gabriele Schmitt
 Hawk Watch: Judith Cinquina
 Newsletter: Carol Flanagan
 Programs: Monica Cardoza
 Publicity: Mike Lefebvre
 Webmasters: Kevin Watson
 Tom Mitchell

The Fyke Nature Association, a 501 (c) (3) organization, meets eight times a year. These are the meeting dates for 2022 and 2023. All are Fridays.

November - no meeting	April 28, 2023	September 22, 2023
December 2, 2022	May 19, 2023	October 27, 2023
January 27, 2023	June – no meeting	November – no meeting
February 24, 2023	July – no meeting	December 1, 2023
March 24, 2023	August – no meeting	

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, artwork, news, features, articles on wildlife observation, conservation issues, book reviews, field notes, and humorous first-person bird/nature related stories are welcome. All submissions will be gratefully appreciated!

The deadline for the Spring 2023 issue is January 18, 2023. Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to carolflana@aol.com.

