



Fyke Nature Association Summer Newsletter

Vol. 69 — No. 2 — 2023
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.

Please Note: We require all who attend live presentations at the Allendale Municipal Building to wear a mask as long as you're indoors. Even if you think you don't need one, wear it in consideration of others. If you're not feeling well, have Covid-type symptoms, or just feel like you're not ready for an indoor gathering, please do not come. Instead, wait for the recording of the meeting we plan to make and post online afterward. No registration is required for live presentations.

Zoom presentations require registration. A video of each one will eventually be posted under Programs on www.fykenature.org.

April 28, 2023, Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building Lorrimer Sanctuary: Then and Now, Alexa Fantacone

Just 6 miles from The Celery Farm is the 14-acre Lorrimer Nature Sanctuary, Franklin Lakes. In this live presentation, Alexa Fantacone, director of Lorrimer, discusses the past, present and future of the New Jersey Audubon nature preserve. Learn about the unique history of the property, who Lucine Lorrimer was, and the reinterpretation of this gentleman's farmhouse into a bustling nature center. Alexa will also discuss the current trails, plants and animals you may find on a visit there, and the exciting future for this property.



Alexa Fantacone

April 29 and 30, 2023, Saturday and Sunday – Stepping Up For The Celery Farm, Gabriele Schmitt. Rain dates May 6 and 7.

Our annual fundraiser is based on the number of bird species observed over a two-day period by citizen-scientists, like you. To sign up for the count, please contact Gabriele Schmitt at gaby413@aol.com.

Our fundraising success depends on Celery Farm fans, like you, who pledge an amount per species. Pledges per species can be emailed to our Treasurer, Kurt Muenz, at elkumu@aceweb.com or mailed to Fyke Nature Association, PO Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446. To make a donation or to pledge a per-species amount, please see the pledge form on page 6.

**May 19, 2023, Third Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building
State Line Hawk Watch 2011 to 2022, Karl M. Soehnlein**

State Line Hawk Watch coordinator Karl M. Soehnlein has been involved with the hawk watch since 2011. In this live presentation, Karl will discuss the “phenomenal” 2022 season with over 18,000 counted, as well as the highs and lows of the past 11 years since Stiles Thomas restarted the hawk watch in 2010. Each September through November dedicated volunteers count migrating raptors (hawks, eagles, ospreys, falcons, etc.) that fly over State Line Lookout, and report their findings to the Hawk Migration Association of America (HMANA). Karl is responsible for getting volunteer hawk counters to cover morning and afternoon shifts during the fall migration season—the day after Labor Day through November 15.



Karl M. Soehnlein

Karl got involved with the hawk watch after accidentally stumbling upon it and got hooked on the hawks. He was amazed to find out that Bald Eagles were nesting in the Palisades Interstate Park and could be seen flying along the Hudson River. His “birding” experience started that September.

Mid-July 2023 – Our Tom Burr Memorial Butterfly Walk at the Celery Farm

Date to be determined and will be announced on our email list, Facebook page, and website. Our annual Celery Farm Butterfly Walk is held in memory of Tom Burr, the late Fyke member, naturalist, photographer, and friend. Meet at the end of Green Way at 10:30 a.m. for a 90-minute stroll. Dress for bright sun. Bring water and sunscreen. Rain cancels this walk.

September 1, 2023 – Mt. Peter Hawk Watch begins, Judith Cinquina

Mount Peter would welcome new counters/leaders this fall. If you are all interested, consider becoming part of our hawk watch family and contact me at judycingq@optonline.net. Fyke members can also help with the count or just keep a lonely hawk watcher company. Best time to visit is between September 11 and 21 for “kettles” of Broad-winged Hawks climbing thermals up to the clouds. Mid to late October the Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s Hawks flap and glide past the lookout following the migrant songbirds, and the end of October through November 15, the big guys come through—Red-shouldered and Red-tailed Hawks. Bald Eagles, Osprey, Peregrines, Northern Harriers, and Osprey are possible any time. And don’t forget the homemade ice cream available at the Creamery below the lookout. The watch begins September 1, 2023, and continues daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. until November 15. Contact Judy Cinquina at judycingq@optonline.net to volunteer or for more information.

Directions: The lookout is located on the top of 17A, between Greenwood Lake and Warwick, NY, and is marked by a pair of microwave towers. To reach the lookout, take Route 17 through Tuxedo to 17A and turn left. Follow 17A up the mountain and into Greenwood Lake. Keep right when you reach the lake and follow 17A up the second mountain. When you reach the top, you will see a sign for Bellvale Farms Creamery (excellent homemade ice cream) ahead. Turn right at the ice cream shop onto Kain Road and turn right again up the pot-holed dirt road to the lot or park down below.



Saturday, September 2, 2023 – Mt. Peter Clean-Up. Rain date, Sunday, September 3.

Our annual Clean-Up is scheduled for Saturday, September 2, 2023, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. Rain date is Sunday, September 3. We pick up garbage, cut back trails and clear site lines that obscure incoming hawks using hand tools. We can always use volunteers. Contact Judy Cinquina at judycinq@optonline.net to volunteer or for more information.

Mike's 40th anniversary volunteering at the Celery Farm

This June marks 40 years of volunteer work at the Celery Farm for Marsh Warden, Mike Limatola. No doubt you have seen Mike on one of your visits to the Celery Farm removing invasive plant species, doing trail maintenance, repairing one of the observation platforms, or working with some of our other amazing volunteers on the other jobs necessary to keep the Celery Farm beautiful and safe for plants, wildlife, and humans. Mike is very passionate about conservation, and making sure the Celery Farm remains one of the best nature preserves in the country, recognized nationwide as an important birding area.



Mike first set foot in the Celery Farm when a friend asked him if he wanted to check out this new birding area in Allendale. Mike had never heard of this place, but had his binoculars in his car, so he went. Mike continued to visit the Celery Farm and noticed a lot of invasive plant species, but he also knew that it would be against the rules to cut any plants in the preserve. The bittersweet and multiflora rose were killing native trees, so Mike sneaked in a small hand saw or clippers, and careful not to be seen, cut some of the invasive plant species that were killing native plants. But, one day Mike met a man named Stiles, and he thought he was in trouble. Stiles asked him what he was doing, and Mike told him. Stiles grabbed Mike's hand and said, "Show me". Mike was not in trouble. Stiles was glad to have someone to do that work.

One day when Mike was working at the Celery Farm, a couple saw him and asked what he was doing. Mike told them, and the couple asked Mike if he knew about Fyke. He did not, so the couple invited him to the next Fyke meeting. Now Mike is Fyke's President and the Celery Farm Warden.



Stiles Thomas states, "Mike was a natural to become the next marsh warden. He was dedicated and passionate about preserving the Celery Farm and having a haven for wildlife."

Thank you Mike, from all of us!

Field and Feeder Notes By Judith Cinquina

The favorite, although not (a) necessary autumn and winter food, of (Aythya valisneria) the Canvas-back (sic) is the so-called wild celery (Vallisneria spiralis) from which the species has its name...About one-quarter of the food of the Canvas-back is said to consist of Vallisneria and it is usually maintained that the quality of the flesh depends entirely on this plant...Some unusual foods have been noticed by Audubon, who lists fishes, tadpoles, water-lilies, leeches, snails, and mollusks among the food found in their stomachs...Together with other water-fowl it occasionally gorges itself on decayed salmon in the bays of British Columbia and Washington...Wilson mentions their swarming about a wrecked ship which had been loaded with wheat, at Egg Harbor, New Jersey.

John C. Phillips, A Natural History of the Ducks Vol. III, 1925

Stephanie Seymour counted 26 Canvasbacks over her Ringwood yard while she was conducting her spring hawk watch on March 4. With their long necks and bills, they resembled small geese, migrating overhead in neat V's and strings. The male Canvasback's back is the color of an artist's canvas with a head of burnished copper set off by a dark crown that slopes down to a long black bill, and all framed between its black chest and tail end. Considered a delicious dish, especially if they had fattened up on Wild Celery, hunters formerly bagged as many as they could shoot. Phillips tells of one hunter who bagged 7,000 in one season in 1846-47. Canvasbacks numbers fell during the early twentieth century. Laws changed things and their population increased in the late 70's, but currently they've declined a bit. They feed early and late but sleep a lot during the day, so the 400 plus I counted at DeKorte in Lyndhurst on February 15 all had their bills tucked into their scapulars or back feathers, some with one golden eye open to detect danger. They like the brackish water at DeKorte and at Piermont Pier, NY, where Doug Morel noted a sleepy flock of 62 on the far end of the pier, March 3. He also counted six Goldeneye and a raft of 110 Ruddy Ducks.



© Stephanie Seymour

A few uncommon geese were noted this winter, including White-fronted, Cackling and Ross's. Both John Coyle and Brian Kenney reported a White-fronted in the Hoebel section of Overpeck Park in early January, and Doug found two others in Westwood. Reports of this western vagrant have "increased substantially" since 1975, according to Boyle's Birds of NJ. Wintering Cackling Geese have also increased, perhaps because they were officially split from the small races of Canada Geese in 2004 and now count as a separate "life" bird. Doug scored Cackling in both Westwood and Overpeck Park in February. A Cackling is a miniature Canada Goose. Doug described it as a small, block-headed, short-billed goose. It usually hangs out with the much larger Canadas. A much rarer Ross's Goose turned up at DeKorte, March 7. John Coyle described it as much smaller than the nearby Canada Geese and all white with black wingtips and a small, stubby bill. Essentially, it's a miniature Snow Goose that usually is spotted in Snow Goose companies, but not this time. Unfortunately, the Ross's was a one-day wonder. It was found dead the next day near the entrance to DeKorte.

Lisa Potash reported a drake Eurasian Wigeon at DeKorte, January 29. She wrote it was a "continuing" bird with a cinnamon colored head, buffy forehead, pinkish/brown breast and

gray body. A drake or male, it was seen by many Fyke members. Brian Kenney called it the “Red-headed Wigeon” an appropriate name. A Eurasian Teal and a Long-tailed Duck joined the Wigeon in February at DeKorte, according to John Coyle. He reported all three species, February 12. The “continuing” Teal showed a horizontal stripe on its side, he stated, and was with Green-winged Teal on Saw Mill Creek. Since there were hundreds of Green-winged there, a birder had to either get lucky and have it swim into scope view or search each and every Green-wing to find the one with the horizontal stripe, not the vertical stripe of our native Green-wings. If found, there was no tangible reward. The Eurasian Teal is not a separate species. A “bunch” of Ring-necked Ducks at Rockland Lake “thrilled” Susan Salant, February 12. They should be leaving our area in March, or just as soon as lakes open up in Maine or north. Susan was also happy to hear her FOY Red-winged Blackbird that same day, “a sure sign of spring,” she wrote.

A light morph Rough-legged Hawk hunted DeKorte, February 15. I spotted it perched in a patch of woods on the north end of Disposal Road, its wide dark belly band obvious. I haven’t seen one at DeKorte since 2015. The grasslands over the garbage mounds had recently been cut, so I wondered if there were any rodent prey available since the mice, shrews and rats need taller grass to provide cover. It later hovered over the wooded area like a huge kestrel and showed its dark carpal patches and dark terminal tail band. I suspect that it moved on. It was probably the same light morph spotted over the Richard Kane Natural Area, a short distance away in Carlstadt, February 21. It should be heading north to breed in treetops in the coniferous forests and tundra of arctic Alaska and Canada any day now. An adult Bald Eagle visited the CF between February 17 and 25. Neil MacLennan saw it circling over Lake Appert on the 17th while an immature sat on the lake. Susan Salant found the adult on the 25th. The “big beauty” was perched on a mound in Lake Appert, but she regretted it was too far away to show well in her photo. Susan Ishii feels spoiled by the Peregrine pair that swoop close to her Cliffside Park windows several times a week. Susan writes, “I have yet to see a kill but do see them eating perched atop the neighboring building.” From her windows, Susan has a view of the George Washington Bridge where they may decide to nest.

The Celery Farm’s (CF’s) resident Virginia Rail was first spotted by Neil MacLennan February 13. Kevin Watson managed a close-up of this elusive species on the 26th. Pough states in his Audubon Water Bird Guide, 1951 that they stick “so close to the dense vegetation of the fresh or semi-brackish marshes in which they live that they are hard to find.” But their calls, like evil laughter, are loud and sometimes startlingly close. Neil and Doug also found the first CF Wilson’s Snipe, March 1. Like the proverbial first Robin on our lawns, the Snipe signals the coming of spring migration. A few may nest along the Wallkill River or Great Swamp but those in our area are passing through.



© Kevin Watson

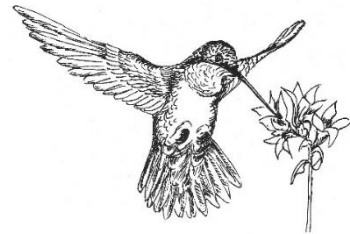
The Woodcock is another spring harbinger, and once again it was Neil MacLennan who spotted the first one, and it wasn’t at dusk or in the dark. On March 5, he arrived at Halifax at 11 a.m. and found the Woodcock at the far end of the first field adjacent to the parking area. But to see its courtship displays, you must go at dusk, preferably on a still, moonlit night. On the 12th, Sue Dougherty and Mike Limatola had “amazing views” of Woodcock at Halifax. Mike wrote that they heard the first peents from three or four Woodcock at 6:10 p.m. He continued, “At one point up to eight birds were displaying, and we were surrounded” with chirps and twittering wings. Amy Griffin was also there with her son in March and counted six launching themselves into the air. She wrote, we “had them fly right by us, maybe 10 feet over our heads!” Mike reported that the best place to see them is the grass strip to the left of the pump house. The color of dried leaves and wet dirt, the Woodcock is so well camouflaged that when it’s not courting,

you can almost step on one before you see it. Usually solitary, it prefers wet woodlands where worms are plentiful.

Neil traditionally counts the flocks of wintering birds that descend into the CF late in the day. On March 2 he tallied 800 Starlings, 100 Robins, 100 Red-wings, and 42 C. Grackles, his best count this winter. The birds are there to roost overnight in the dense stands of Phragmites (reeds). The numbers give each individual a better chance to survive the night when hunting owls, foxes and others are on the prowl. Some are migrants on their way north. Others are waiting to grab best territories nearby. Numbers change daily.

As I write, I have yet to see a Fox Sparrow in my yard. Betty McDonnell, however, had one show up under her Mahwah feeders, March 12. "I did not have any last year," she wrote "so I'm celebrating my new guest." Another rusty-colored arrival was spotted at DeKorte on the 17th. John Coyle had a Brown Thrasher pop up out of budding forsythia near the main entrance to the park. "The bird showed itself very briefly just above the top of the forsythias and then hunkered back down into the thick shrubbery," John stated. He waited for some time, hoping it would reappear, but it didn't cooperate. Lisa Potash is also waiting. She has a pair of gray Screech Owls in her Oakland yard and is hoping they nest and are successful. Although a pair fledged three young in her yard in 2020, nesting pairs have failed to raise young the last two years.

It's time to think about hummingbirds. They may pass through as early as April, so get your feeders ready. It's a tough time for them to find sufficient nectar and/or insects, especially if we have a late cold snap. And soon the trees will be filled with the voices of colorful migrants. Share you spring sightings with all of us at fykenature@groups.io where many of the reports for this column originated, or send your observations to me at judycing@optonline.net.



Stepping Up For The Celery Farm Pledge Form – 2023

Send your pledge by e-mail to Kurt Muenz, elkumu@acweb.com. If you do not have email, you can mail your pledge to The Fyke Nature Association, Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446.

Yes, I want to support Stepping Up For The Celery Farm by making a pledge per bird species seen over the two-day period. I understand that 65 to 93 species have been recorded, however, the total could be higher if conditions are ideal.

My pledge is:

\$1/species \$.75/species \$.50/species \$.25/species \$____/species

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Welcome New Member

Dan Montella, Waldwick



Welcome to our new Recording Secretary, Gloria Antaramian

Welcome to our new Newsletter editor, Crista Murphy

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

April 28, 2023
May 19, 2023
June – no meeting

July – no meeting
August – no meeting
September 22, 2023

October 27, 2023
November – no meeting
December 1, 2023

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 Fall 2023 issue is August 23, 2023. Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446. or via e-mail to crista430@gmail.com.

