



Spring Newsletter
Vol. 63 — No. 1 — 2017
www.fykenature.org

In Memory of John Brotherton. Fyke's Treasurer and Past President died on January 26, 2017. John led many field trips for us, including the popular North Shore trip, and was co-compiler of our Christmas Bird Count. John loved the Celery Farm and was one of its core volunteers for several decades. The Celery Farm's Brotherton Bridge was named for him, and Jim Wright wrote "it could not have been better-named — sturdy, durable, straightforward and always there when you need it."

We have lost a true friend of Fyke and the natural world.
Our deepest condolences go out to John's family.



Calendar of Events

February 24, 2017 — Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building **Birdsong: Nature's Chorus, Gabriel Willow**

Possibly one of the most delightful behaviors birds have evolved is their ability to sing. Birdsong has inspired poets and musicians for millennia, and may be the source behind our own song and music. As any serious birder knows, learning birdsong is also essential to locating and identifying birds; many species are much easier to hear than to see. In this program, naturalist and educator Gabriel Willow will explore the world of birdsong, the morphology and biology behind it, and how to identify some of the more common songs in our area.

March 11, 2017 — Field Trip: Woodcocks at the Great Swamp NWR

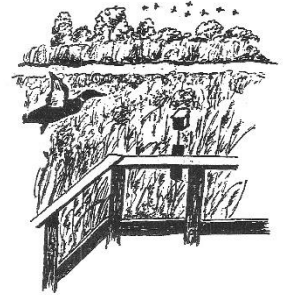
Meet at the Great Swamp at the Heronry parking lot at 4 p.m. There will be some late day birding. Bring a light snack to enjoy while we wait for sunset. Leader: Mike Limatola. Please register for this trip with Mike at 201-739-8062 or mike.limatola@gmail.com.

**March 24, 2017 — Monthly meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building
Falkland Islands and South Georgia: Antarctic wildlife spectacular, Kevin Watson**

They may be earth's greatest but least-known wildlife destination: the remote Falkland Islands and South Georgia are the breeding and nesting grounds for many of the bird and mammal species that inhabit the rich but stormy waters surrounding Antarctica. We'll see glacial plains filled with countless thousands of King Penguins, majestic albatrosses gliding a few feet overhead, huge Elephant Seals battling on the beaches, and much more. Join photographer Kevin Watson for an unforgettable wildlife voyage to the other end of the earth!

April 1, 2017 — 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, 201-739-8062 or mike.limatola@gmail.com. Rain date is April 2, 2017.



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**The 64th Ramsey Christmas Bird Count  
By Lisa Ann Fanning**

The tradition continues. It has been 117 years since Ornithologist Frank Chapman proposed taking a census of the birds on Christmas day, rather than hunt them. Every Audubon Christmas Bird Count (or CBC) is held between December 14, 2016 to January 5, 2017. We originally had scheduled the Ramsey count to be held December 17, 2016 but due to a bleak, icy forecast, we recast that date to January 2, 2017.

32 Participants head out in 8 teams and kicked off the new year doing what we love to do, counting birds. Numbers seemed lower than usual, as other compilers of other CBCs have noted. We counted 11,023 individual birds, representing a total of 78 species. Partially frozen still water helped keep duck numbers down. While songbird numbers were lower than usual as well.

Some notable sightings include: 2 Snow Geese (only ever seen 14 times,) 3 Green-winged Teal (10 times), 1 Common Loon (21 times), A Virginia Rail (11 times) was flushed from the pipe by Team Fanning team member, Andrew Marden. Team Paolillo found a single Red Crossbill in their territory (only seen on 2 counts.)

Teams gave fierce battles for the traditional awards. Team CooX2 edged out defending champions, team Kantrowitz by 1 Blue Jay to take THE COVETED BLUE JAY AWARD with a total of 109. BEST TEAM TROPHY found a new home with Team Novinski and Team Fanning one again retained the HOUSE SPARROW TROPHY, counting 291 of the cute little overlooked Black-throated Browns.



Many thanks to Gaby Schmitt and Rob Fanning for reading the "Index Cards" representing over six decades of historical data and trends. This is the fun part of the recap! It's always great to hear how the species stack up against prior years.

And finally, I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge John Brotherton, who helped plan this event until that week. John, we will miss you! Please smile down on us every year with great weather and great birds.

## Field and Feeder Notes By Judith Cinquina



*In its search for food (the Fox Sparrow)... scratches noisily among the leaves, using both feet lustily as it comes down, sending a shower of leaves, dust, or sand backward a yard or more. If snow is on the ground, the bird will scratch through the snow to uncover leaves beneath. This ability to find food under snow permits the fox sparrow to migrate earlier and occupy its summer range sooner than a number of other birds not so generously endowed with long toes and claws.*

From Garden Birds of America, Collins & Boyajian, 1965.

The Fox Sparrow traditionally overwinters in south Jersey, but its towhee-like ‘double-scratch’ method of hunting also allows it to spend the colder months with us when winters are not too severe. Sporting breast stripes like a Song Sparrow, but larger, handsomer, our fox-colored version of this species from the far north blends well with the fallen leaves when it first arrives in the fall. Betty Mc Donnell spotted the first one in our Fyke area on her Mahwah patio November 9, at the peak of their migration. Many continue to more southern states, but a few have remained at feeders in Allendale and Upper Saddle River and at the CF (Celery Farm). Rosemarie Widmer had three celebrate the end of the year at dusk in her Allendale backyard, December 31, and was surprised to count four there, January 19. The majority will pass back through our area in mid-March or April when we may be fortunate to hear one sing. In his Audubon field guide (1946) Richard Pough described its song as “a variable carol of clear, melodious notes, richer than those of any other sparrow.” According to Weckstein, Kroodsma and Faucett (2002), *Birds of N. Am. Online*, female Fox Sparrows also sing, although it’s a weaker, shorter version of the song. The eBird map of recent Fox Sparrow sightings shows that most were found recently along our coast and rivers where they find shelter in tangles and feed on ragweed, smart weed, cedar berries, or withered summer fruits like the crab apples at the CF.

Speaking of CF crab apples, Barbara Dilger photographed Purple Finches feeding on the cherry-sized apples there, October 30. As she pointed out, the finches were either females or immature. That species doesn’t reach adult status until its second year, so both young resemble the female until their second summer. Red-breasted Nuthatches had a mini-irruption this fall, with some passing through, like Mimi Brauch’s “first for my yard” Red-breasted in Midland Park, October 20. Alice Lureck posted a photo of one atop a pine, one of their favorite sources of seed, at the CF, three days later. The severe New England drought and a poor cone production forced this tiny nuthatch south. Some became winter visitors, like the ball of fluff Barbara Dilger photographed in her Waldwick yard, New Year’s Eve. That fluff encased its tiny body in warmth that the best LLBean jackets could only dream about. Mark Kantrowitz, Hillsdale, Charlie West, Allendale and Eric Sibbald, Upper Saddle River, each had one Red-breasted at their feeders, January 8. While a few Fyke members reported one or two American Tree Sparrows at their feeders, Eric counted 15 in USR. Their calls are like wind chimes on a winter day.



A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker spent most of the winter at Lorrimer in Franklin Lakes, according to Patrick Scheuer. Two in “brilliant” yellow, red and black plumages visited Rosemarie’s Allendale yard, December 11. Each ate one berry from an unidentified shrub and flew on. Another turned up across from Mark Kantrowitz’s Hillsdale yard, January 8. All were males. Unlike Hairy, Downy and Pileated Woodpeckers, this species migrates, with females moving as far south as Central America but males often winter with us or as close to their northern breeding grounds as weather and food allow. And a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers

cooperated for Loren Anderson, December 28, allowing her to photograph the pair on the same tree from her Oakland deck. Sara and Michael Buckley thought one they spotted New Year's Day was "a good omen for 2017."

Rusty Blackbird numbers have declined steeply in the last 20 years. I remember finding a swampy field of "dozens and dozens" of Red-winged and Rusty Blackbirds at Hyper Humus, Sussex County on April 22, 2001. Unfortunately, none of the birders I was with thought of counting them. I have never seen that many Rusty Blackbirds since, so a "nice flock" of 15-20 that the lucky Hour on the Tower folks labeled the BOD (Bird of the Day), November 6 is encouraging. Charlie West wrote that the flock "provided close and personal looks by perching in the large Sycamore just north of The Tower." The CF has become the place to go for Rusties in the Fyke area. The "Towerites" also bagged five raptors that day, including a N. Harrier, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-shoulder and Red-tail and, the following week, a Peregrine Falcon that was "so hell-bent on migrating that it never paused or even slowed down!" Charlie wrote. A Bald Eagle joined that CF line-up on December 1, spotted by Deedee Burnside.

Tim Tedesco noted another Bald Eagle over Mahwah near Route 287, November 1, and Gaby Schmitt discovered three, all immature, around Oradell Reservoir, New Year's Day. An immature Red-shouldered Hawk, most likely offspring from the Allendale nest, stopped at Rosemarie Widmer's yard for a drink, January 8. Rosemarie, who lives near the CF, said the Shoulder perched on the rim of her birdbath and drank, then stepped into the water. Unfortunately, there was no room for a proper bath, and it flew off. Breeding Red-shoulders made NJ's "Endangered" designation in 1991 mainly because of the decline of their preferred wetland habitat. How fortunate they have found a haven in the middle of this crowded suburbia, thanks to the CF and the Fyke members who maintain it. The large raptor with white tail bands in Janet Tedesco's Oakland yard, January 8 may also have been a Shoulder. Janet stated it was eating a House Sparrow. Although they prefer small mammals, snakes and amphibians, a Shoulder won't turn its beak up at a bird.



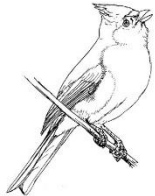
Cooper's Hawks have been haunting feeders in Mahwah, Allendale and Upper Saddle River, making the Juncos, White-throats, and finches very nervous. According to Cornell Lab eNews, January 2017, Cooper's Hawks have been opting to spend winters here in the north instead of migrating to Mexico as they did in the past. "The hawks possibly learned that bird feeders create large groupings of prey," the report states, but populations of the prey species "are still stable." At least one adult and one immature have hunted my feeder birds and jumped around in the shrub where sparrows like to hide, but I have yet to witness a kill or find a circle of songbird feathers in my yard. The life of a Coop isn't easy.

Three Yellow-rumped Warblers were at Mahwah Green Acres (Mary Patrick Park), December 3, Simon Streatfeild reported. According to Boyle, *The Birds of NJ*, 2011, December marks the tail end of their migration through our area, although flocks do remain along our coast, where they feed on bayberry and poison ivy fruits. Lisa and Rob Fanning's CBC (Christmas Bird Count) team confirmed that the Virginia Rail was alive and well in the CF marsh, January 2. This rail prefers fresh water marshes which are rare in NJ. Perhaps the best find was the immature Snow Goose reported by Dave Kaplan. It was feeding with Canadas at the Church of Presentation in Upper Saddle River, December 22. Lorraine Novinski's CBC group refound the immature keeping company with an adult Snow Goose and Canadas at Secor Farm in Mahwah, January 2. Uncommon in our area, this species has increased beyond the carrying capacity of the tundra where it breeds. New food



sources have fueled a rapid population growth, while its habit of grubbing or pulling tubers from the ground have denuded large parts of the tundra and some wintering areas, affecting habitat for shorebirds and waterfowl. According to Mowbray, Cooke and Ganter (2000) in *N. American Birds On Line*, "Current estimates place its population at between 5 and 6 million, a number that may be environmentally unsustainable."

The Tufted Titmouse is already giving its "peter, peter, peter" calls, Carol Flanagan wrote, January 10. Take a moment to listen for them, and you may also hear the Chickadees' whistled "Phoebe" or the softer, lower-pitched honking of a White-breasted Nuthatch. Spring is in the air, no matter what's outside your window or on your calendar. And a friend who supports prime Purple Martin housing told me the Martins have already landed in Florida. They're on their way here already. While we wait for their arrival, please keep your feeders clean and full, and let us know what you observe.



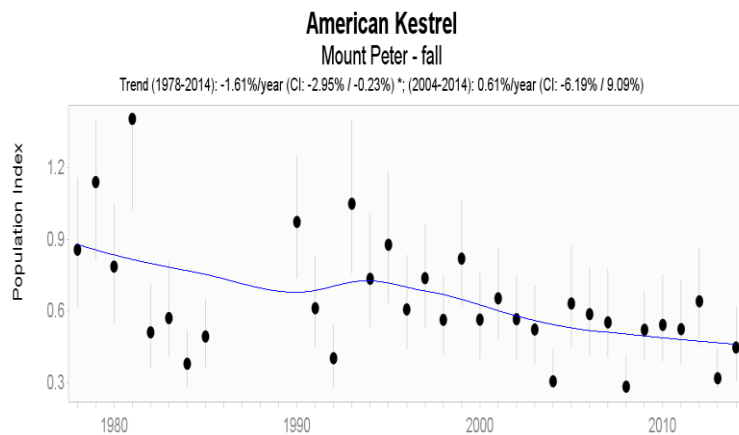
For information on the latest bird sightings, go to [www.fykenature.org](http://www.fykenature.org) and sign up with our discussion group where many of the reports for this column originated. Or send your observations to me at [judycinq@optonline.net](mailto:judycinq@optonline.net).

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Mount Peter – 2016
By Judith Cinquina

The 2016 Mount Peter Hawk Watch included 22 days of deep blue skies from September 1 – November 15, challenging our nine leaders to not only find a migrant but also to share sightings with visitors. Even though we put in a record 488 hours on the watch, the 8,448 raptors we counted by season's end was a bit below our recent 10-year average and a disappointment after 2015's near-record 13,481. Turkey Vultures generated our only daily record, and they're not even related to raptors!

Between September 13 and 29, the bulk of Broad-winged Hawks moved over the lookout. The 5,894 recorded was below our 10-year average, an average that has crept upwards since 2005, when this tally would have been above average. Ken Witkowski netted 2,279 on light NW winds, September 21, our sole 1,000+ day. Red-shoulders bounced up a bit, with 104 noted: 37 adult, 24 immature, and 43 unknown. Ken scored the only two-digit day with 18, October 36 on moderate NW winds. An above-average 478 Red-tails went through, but there were no three-digit days. Will we ever witness kettles of 10 or more Red-tails over our lookout again, or are they opting to stay north? Most of the Tails moved through between October 23 and November 13, with Denise Farrell claiming the best day of 71 on moderate NW winds, November 4. For the sixth consecutive season, Rough-legs were a no-show.

A very average 1,104 Sharp-shinned Hawks failed to produce even one three-digit day. A feisty species, one dove repeatedly at a Peregrine Falcon, September 13 and somehow escaped retribution. Cooper's Hawk numbers were also average at 94, with no two-digit days recorded, while our largest accipiter, the N. Goshawk, like last year, failed to make an appearance. American Kestrels surpassed 2015's low with a mere 52 noted: 9 male, 12 female, 31 unknown. That Kestrel count is the lowest in our 59-year history, except for 1958 – 1960 when the lookout was manned for less than 12 hours a season! The 15 Merlin was a bit under par, and the Peregrine Falcon number was about average at 13. We have never been a prime falcon lookout.



The trend line on the chart reflects the decline of the Kestrel, from our record 592 in 1981 through 2014. Not shown, low counts the last 2 years & our 2nd & 3rd highest counts in 1966 & 1970 with 538 & 519 counted respectively.
Chart from RPI (Raptor Population Index)

For the first time since 1977, our watch failed to reach a triple digit tally for Osprey. Most of the 98 seen moved through in September. The 35 N. Harrier counted was a bit better than last year: 5 male, 7 female, 10 immature, and 13 unknown, but still pathetic by any standards. The Bald Eagle produced a brighter picture with 95 noted: 51 adult, 42 immature, 2 unknown. A resident pair and possible offspring escorted many eagle migrants out of their territory or headed in wrong directions, and weren't counted. A mere three Golden Eagles, all immature, turned up between October 29 and November 7. Thanks to Matt Zeitler and Bill O'Keefe who posted photos on our Facebook page, we all got to share in the excitement. Turkey Vultures are difficult to count at Mount Peter because so many hunt the local fields in the area, but 337 seemed headed south. This species broke our only daily record with 101 tallied on October 19. Ken Witkowski stated that many were so high, a scope was needed to find them, and he counted over 40 in one of those high groups. The local C. Ravens were almost daily company, and five or six perched on our nearby microwave tower a couple of times. Undoubtedly, they were our local family unit.

Monarch Butterflies were noted from September 4 through November 2, with a low 131 counted, and the 32 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds spotted was better than last year. A mere 3,152 Canada Geese were tallied between September 25 and October 14, with Rick Hansen capturing the best day of 1,068, October 9. October 26 produced our only Snow Geese (30) and the 31st our only Brant (25). Between September 15 and October 3, 132 Double-crested Cormorants went through, with Bill O'Keefe noting 69, September 15. From September 29 to November 6, 23 C. Loons headed east towards Greenwood Lake.

Other birds of interest included:

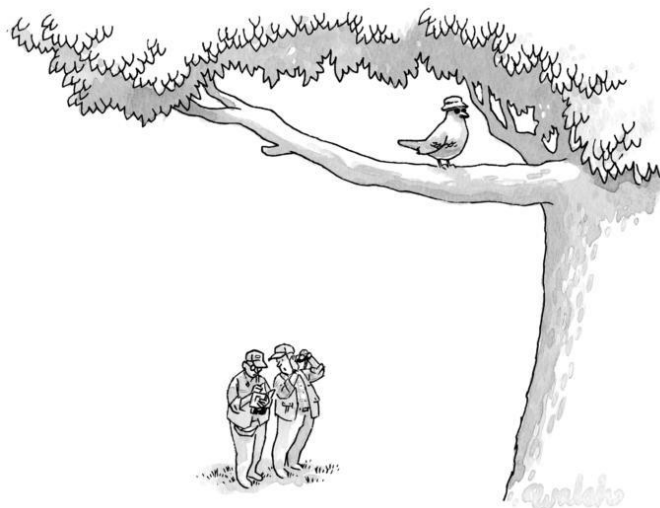
- September 2 2 Red-breasted Nuthatch (1-4 seen almost daily through 11/1) first Black-Green & first 2 Yellow-rumped Warblers
- 3 Scarlet Tanager
- 6 Indigo Bunting
- 9 first Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, first 2 Purple Finch (7 more through 11/1)
- 10 Red-headed Woodpecker (another 10/7), Wilson's and 4 Cape May Warblers
- 18 first Am. Redstart
- 20 Mourning Dove pair on nest, first Palm and Black & White Warblers
- 21 first Nashville Warbler and first Ruby-crowned Kinglet
- 23 first Blue-headed Vireo
- 28 first Golden-crowned Kinglet
- 29 E. Wood Pewee

- October 4 Rose-breasted Grosbeak
- 7 2 Chipping Sparrows
- 11 Field & 2 White-throated Sparrows
- 15 Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (another 10/28)
- 16 first Pine Warbler
- 18 79 Black-capped Chickadees (another 35 on 11/1) first 2 Blackpoll Warbler & first Dark-eyed Junco

November 6 25 Am. Pipit

In spite of the absence of two of our regular leaders, our lookout was covered a record 488 hours, primarily thanks to Ken Witkowski who manned the watch two days a week and Denise Farrell who put in 16 days and filled in whenever needed. We extend a big welcome to new leader Will Test and a welcome back to Beverly Robertson. We deeply appreciate all our visitors who helped pick migrants out of all the infinite, blue skies and Bill Connolly, Carol Linguanti and Rob Stone who gave us so much support. Kudos to our clean-up crew: Denise, Beverly, Gaby Schmitt, Gene Tappan, Will, Ken, Matt Zeitler and especially Tom Millard who put up and took down our box on the platform. We're grateful for Bill O'Keefe's storage innovation for our banner and Matt's willingness to attend the NYDEC meeting and represent our lookout. Finally, we are indebted to the Fyke Nature Association for their continued support and sponsorship of our watch and Mount Peter site on hawkcount.org. Check out our Raptor Population Index charts at our site on hawkcount. They're impressive. Next season we will celebrate 60 years of continuous fall coverage, and as always we remain the oldest, continually run, all-volunteer fall watch in the country.

2016 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.	46	239	353	194	91	1,424	207	18	165	2,777	159	0	5	156	81	30	5,967	458
STATE LINE	60	1,308	856	160	74	1,258	239	5	352	1,010	538	1	1	227	61	61	6,317	449
MONTCLAIR	21	1,042	180	102	31	670	165	2	174	1,074	74	0	1	128	53	23	3,764	560
MOUNT PETER	84	337	98	95	35	1,104	94	0	104	5,894	478	0	3	52	15	13	8,448	488



"Maybe it doesn't want to be identified."
 From The New Yorker – submitted by Enid Hayflick

Awaken
By Doug Morel

Approaches the equinox
with warming soils,
lengthening days,
and grasses greening.



The new shoots of bulbs
breaking through softened surface,
reaching for light
to stretch out bloom,
brightening an onlooker's mood.

Cool rains, enabling seed,
feeding thirsty root,
providing a welcome shroud
of faint red and gold
to an awakening canopy.

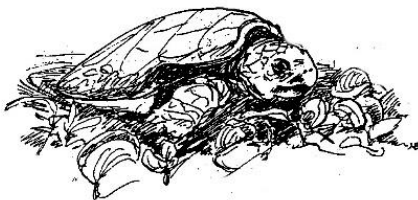
Released by sharp gusts,
pale clouds of pollen
drift free and leeward
to settle on welcoming flower.

The slumbering arise,
emerging from crevice and den
to search of whole forage,
in need to produce.

Winged migrants are thrust,
driven by haste and purpose,
to instinctive flight
to ancestral northern grounds.

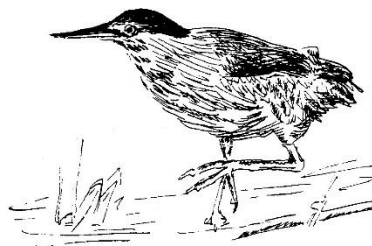


The aroma of Spring
soon to be prevalent.
Air perfumed with lilac,
rich humus under foot,
quenching an ample desire
for the onset of renewal.



Dues Reminder Notice

We are now well into our dues year (9-1-2016 to 8-31-2017) and not everyone has paid their dues. Dues are \$15.00 for individual membership and \$20.00 for family membership. Make checks payable to Fyke Nature Association, and mail to Fyke Nature Association, Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446.



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### Fyke Board of Trustees:

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The Fyke Nature Association, a 501 (c) (3) organization, meets at the Allendale Municipal Building, 500 W. Crescent Avenue, Allendale, NJ 07401 on the fourth Friday of every month January to May, and in September and October. The winter meeting is the first Friday in December. (No meetings in June, July, August, and November.)

Meetings and membership are open to all. Annual dues: Individual -- \$15.00; Family -- \$20.00. For further information, write to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, visit our website www.fykenature.org, or call Mike Limatola, President, at 201-739-8062. The Newsletter is published four times a year and manuscripts and artwork are welcome. Interim Editor: Carol Flanagan, carolflana@aol.com. Production: Molly Gardener, Herb Gardener, and Carol Flanagan.

The deadline for the Summer 2016 issue is March 23, 2017. Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to carolflana@aol.com.

