



Spring Newsletter
Vol. 64 — No. 1 — 2018
www.fykenature.org

Calendar of Events

February 23, 2018 — Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building **Our National Parks: A Personal Journey, John Kashwick**

John Kashwick will speak about the significance of national parks and why they are still important through his personal experiences visiting 46 of the 59 national parks. As the National Park Service enters its second century in a trying political climate for federal public lands, he will reflect on his visits, he will reflect on his visits to various parks, why the parks are more important than ever, and what the future may hold for expansion.

March 10, 2018 — 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, mike.limatola@gmail.com.

March 23, 2018 — Monthly meeting: 8:00 p.m., Allendale Municipal Building **Birding the Himalayas: Bhutan and Northern India, Kevin Watson**

The Himalayas are famous as the highest mountain range on earth, but the forested slopes and foothills also hold a dazzling diversity of bird life. Nowhere is this more evident than in the remote Buddhist kingdom of Bhutan, where 70 percent of the land is pristine forest. The Himalayan slopes in India also boast some fine birding habitat and spectacular scenery, including India's oldest national park, the Corbett Tiger Reserve. Where the mountains end, the vast Gangetic plain begins, with the bustle, noise and cultural mosaic of Indian farms, villages and cities, along with an impressive array of incredible wildlife. Photographer Kevin Watson presents a visual tour of these distant landscapes, and their remarkable birds and mammals.

“Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see the shadows. It's what the sunflowers do.”
~ Helen Keller

April 7, 2018 — 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 8, 2018.

President's Notes By Mike Limatola

I'm happy to announce that Gabrielle Schmitt has been appointed as a Deputy Marsh Warden at the Celery Farm.

Gaby has shown exemplary volunteerism over the past few years and is well deserving of this appointment! She has worked tirelessly at the Celery Farm, The Raptor Trust, and as a Fyke board member, and will be a great addition to the warden staff.

Editor's note: Congratulations Gaby and thank you for all you do!

The Ramsey Christmas Bird Count By Rob and Lisa Ann Fanning

Snowy walks and frozen lakes were the theme of this year's Audubon Christmas Bird Count (CBC.) Held on December 16, 2017, there were plenty of both.

28 brave souls made up 8 teams for nearly 70 hours of counting our little avian friends. Collectively, we counted 16,202 individuals made up of 82 species. Frozen lakes and ponds kept waterfowl numbers down once again.



Some notable species found by the teams include - 20 Snow Geese, 1 Cackling Goose, 7 Redhead, 1 Long-tailed Duck, 17 Common Goldeneye, 19 Screech Owls, 15 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, 1 each of Kestrel, Peregrine and Merlin, 8 Ravens, 2 Red-breasted Nuthatches, 5 Hermit Thrushes, 11 Rusty Blackbirds, 50 Eastern Bluebirds, 5 Field Sparrows, 29 Golden-crowned Kinglets and 1 Ruby-Crowned Kinglet. A few new high counts were achieved for Common Merganser (4321,) and Red-shouldered Hawks (6.) Team Fanning was thrilled to add a calling Screech Owl to the tally right outside the Municipal Building (within territory) just before the recap meeting.

Teams gave fierce battles for the traditional awards. Team CooX2 once again walked away with the THE COVETED BLUE JAY AWARD. BEST TEAM TROPHY was a tie - Teams G and H shared the honors. So G took the coveted trophy home, and Team H was awarded the NEW Brotherton Memorial Award



in honor of Pat and John. Since the trophy is an outhouse (homage to an inside joke the team has about looking for bathrooms,) going forward, it will be awarded to the #2 team. Team Fanning once again retained the HOUSE SPARROW AWARD - those cute little Weaver Finches stand up to be counted year after year for Team Fanning.

Thank you to all those who participated, and slipped and slid along the way. YOU make this event a success year after year to keep a wonderful birding tradition going strong.

Species counts for the 2017 Ramsey CBC:

Snow Goose 20	Red-bellied Wood. 72
Cackling Goose 1	Yellow-bellied Sap. 15
Canada Goose 2339	Downy Woodpecker 68
Mute Swan 41	Hairy Woodpecker 20
Wood Duck 4	N. (Yel.-sh.) Flicker 21
Gadwall 100	Pileated Woodpecker 15
Am. Wigeon 1	E. Phoebe 1
Black Duck 40	Blue Jay 372
Mallard 528	Am. Crow 294
N. Pintail 2	Fish Crow 26
Redhead 7	Com. Raven 8
Ring-necked Duck 250	Black-capped Chick. 122
Lesser Scaup 2	Tufted Titmouse 161
Long-tailed Duck 1	Red-breasted Nut. 2
Bufflehead 96	White-breasted Nut. 83
Com. Goldeneye 17	Brown Creeper 7
Hooded Merganser 293	Carolina Wren 38
Com. Merganser 4321	Winter Wren 5
Ruddy Duck 4	Golden-crowned King. 29
Wild Turkey 42	Ruby-crowned King. 1
Common Loon 2	E. Bluebird 50
Pied-billed Grebe 7	Hermit Thrush 5
Great Blue Heron 10	Am. Robin 344
Black Vulture 30	N. Mockingbird 16
Turkey Vulture 46	Eur. Starling 1486
Bald Eagle 14	Cedar Waxwing 33
Sharp-shinned Hawk 3	Yellow-rumped Warb. 1
Cooper's Hawk 12	Eastern Towhee 2
Red-shouldered Hawk 6	Am. Tree Sparrow 10
Red-tailed Hawk 54	Field Sparrow 5
Am. Kestrel 1	Fox Sparrow 3
Merlin 1	Song Sparrow 64
Peregrine 1	White-throated Sp. 320
Am. Coot 40	Dark-eyed Junco 658
Ring-billed Gull 1604	N. Cardinal 92
Herring Gull 11	Red-winged Blackbird 13
Rock Pigeon 553	Rusty Blackbird 11
Mourning Dove 349	Com. Grackle 8
E. Screech-Owl 19	House Finch 103
Great Horned Owl 3	Am. Goldfinch 87
Belted Kingfisher 13	House Sparrow 633



**The HXT
COOx2 (a.k.a. Charley West) Dec '17**

The P-M Tower stands all forlorn -
Much like the Cow with the crumpled horn -
Looks forward to Sundays with hope reborn -
For friends with bins that will soon adorn.

At staggered times they climb the stairs -
Dressed in clothes that gather stares -
Some with hats that hinder glares -
Some without such worldly cares.

All-in-All a motley troupe -
Yet (somehow?) a friendly group -
Among their goals they seek a "beaut!" -
A specie that will yield a scoop.

For an hour their joined intent -
To make the Tower-time well spent -
Sighting birds to feel content -
With confirmed ID's and no dissent.

The Hour's done - - Then comes the List -
A tally made of feathered grist -
With hope that none is ever missed -
And all those shown in fact exist!



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**Field and Feeder Notes  
By Judith Cinquina**

*The Rusty Blackbird comes to us from the south in early spring about the time when Pickering's hyla begins peeping. The tinkling notes of the Blackbird are, indeed, ever associated in my mind with the bell-like calls of the hyla, for at this season the two sounds are usually heard together. Being pitched on nearly the same key, it is not always easy to discriminate them, especially when a score of Blackbirds and several hundred hylas are exercising their vocal organs at once.*

*Bent's Life Histories; William Brewster (1906) Massachusetts*

Gaby Schmitt discovered three Rusty Blackbirds at the Celery Farm (CF), December 8. She wrote, that they were "in the leaf litter along the little stream." That is the perfect description of where to look for them there or at Halifax, Mahwah Green Acres (Mary Patrick Park), or any lake, stream or wetlands in our area during migration. They pass through in late March through April, but know their calls, for they are difficult to spot since their numbers have declined drastically in the last 50 years. I have never heard of anyone else comparing their calls to those of spring peepers. To me they sound like an old, spooky squeaking door. They nest at the top of North America, further north than any other blackbird species, and the only thing macabre about them is their penchant for eating other birds. According to Michael L Avery in

Rusty Blackbird (2013), The Birds of North America Online, they have been known to kill Snipe, American Robins (“they fed on the heads.”), White-crowned and Tree Sparrows, and American Goldfinches (“twice knocked one out of the sky”). The author points out that this is not their usual fare and that “harsh, cold weather and probable food shortage characterized each occasion.” Their large, bulky, arboreal nests are often reused by Solitary Sandpipers and others.

In 1982, scraps of former farmland could still be found in the Fyke area, and so could small flocks of migrant Horned Larks. Although most of the barren and short grass patches they preferred support housing or commercial enterprise now, Doug Morel managed to find 14, December 26, in Westwood. By January 12, the flock had grown to 43. These world-wide wanderers sport tiny black “horns,” and those in NE America wear the brightest black and yellow accents and have the largest bodies of all their tribe. Keeping with tundra-loving birds, Doug also found one Snow Goose at Halifax in Mahwah, January 13, along with two C. Goldeneye along the Ramapo River in nearby Oakland. Although messy skeins of migrant Brant are often spotted over the CF, occasionally one will take a break on Lake Appert in October or November. Fred Weber found one there, October 22 where it was photographed by David Kaplan’s dad. Kevin Watson captured a troop of seven Pectoral Sandpipers along the muddy edge of Lake Appert, October 23 with one photo showing off their densely striped bibs and hay-colored legs and a second photo (my favorite) capturing them in flight. That photo revealed Pectorals have diamond shaped tails.



Cooper’s Hawks are expected around feeders, but an immature ended up in Betty McDonnell’s dog kennel in Mahwah, December 18, probably in hot pursuit of a bird. Betty wrote that the Coop entered the kennel through a 14” dog door, and she had to open a window to let it out. Coops are known to pursue prey into bushes, chicken coops, and barns, even when humans are nearby. An adult Coop did Rosemarie Widmer a favor January 19, in Allendale. She had just knocked on her window in an attempt to shoo a Starling off her gourmet nut feeder, to no avail, when there was a loud swoosh, as a panic of birds exploded in all directions. An adult Coop barreled in, grabbed the Starling just as it was taking off, and took it to the ground. Every time the hapless Starling struggled, the accipiter squeezed harder until the victim stopped breathing, at which point the hawk began to pluck and eat. A Red-shouldered Hawk had been hanging around Waldwick for some time, according to Barbara Dilger. She kept hearing it call. Finally, on December 10, she spotted it high over White’s Pond with two Am. Crows in close attendance. Her photo revealed that the Shoulder and Crows were about the same size, a surprise to both of us. The larger Red-tailed Hawk knows how to survive severe winter weather. Mike Limatola grabbed a photo of one standing on a freshly killed squirrel in Allendale, January 5. We take Red-tails for granted, especially during the winter when residents are joined by migrants from the north and can be found at intervals along all our major highways. However, Charles Leck stated in *The Status and Distribution of NJ Birds, 1984* that it was “scarce” as a breeding bird. That certainly has changed. Now they even nest in suburbia and even on 5th Avenue in NY City.



There is no question that the best first bird of 2018 had to go to Nancy Drabik in Wyckoff for her Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Primarily males spend the winter this far north while the females migrate to sunnier resorts. Fifteen were counted December 16 on our Ramsey CBC. Enid Hayflick posted a photo of a leucistic Wild Turkey she spotted at McFaul Environmental Center in Wyckoff, November 25. Although not an albino, the turkey lacked 95% of its usual dark pigment. Generally, melanin or dark pigments add strength to a feather and help prevent wear. It’s the reason that many birds, especially those that spend a lot of time on the wing, have dark

wingtips. Not only may the off-white plumage result in weak, brittle feathers, it may also make the Turkey more conspicuous to predators.

Carol Flannigan saw her first Junco in her Hawthorne yard, November 4. She wrote, “So, snow in six weeks?” I had never heard that maxim before. I’m here to report it contains some truth, for six weeks later, on December 9, it snowed four inches! The single and double-digit temperatures early in 2018 affected many aspects of bird watching, including a bird’s access to fresh water. Case in point: Charlie West wrote, January 1 from Allendale, “The Power Companies – I think they’re producing ‘fake’ electricity! The water in my electrically heated bird bath is freezing!

Be on the lookout for Red Crossbills this winter. According to the winter 2018 issue of Living Bird magazine, Matt Young, who works for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology’s Macaulay Library, advised that the western boreal forest’s cone crop has failed, forcing hordes of crossbills into the Midwest and Northeast where the cone crop is the best it’s been “in decades.” Look for these wandering flocks around pines and other conifers. Red Crossbills are a bit larger than a House Finch and come in shades of cayenne to mustard with black wings for contrast. Their most distinguishing feature, if you manage a close look, is the crossed tips to their bills. That special adaptation acts as tweezers to open and extract pine seeds from a closed cone. Let us know what you find in the field or at your feeders. Be sure to keep your feeders clean. 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 – 2017
By Judith Cinquina

2017 was the 60th anniversary of the Mount Peter Hawk Watch. Since 1958, every fall season has added more data to our knowledge of raptor numbers, migration and behavior. Leaders celebrated by breaking Red-shouldered Hawk and Peregrine Falcon daily records and toppling the old 1990 Peregrine fall count. The euphoria didn’t last long, even with four Golden Eagles and a Goshawk spicing up the final score of 8,996. Our 74-day count, from September 1 through November 15, failed to show any improvement in Harrier or Kestrel numbers, and the Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks seemed happy to either delay or reject migration altogether.



A slightly below average 6,874 Broad-winged Hawks were counted this season, most moving south between September 10 and 22. Leaders Rick Hansen and Ajit Antony garnered the only 1,000+ days. Rick recorded 1,140 on light SW winds, September 17, in spite of fog socking in the lookout for most of that morning. Ajit’s 1,764 Broad-wings on the 21st kettled up in light, northwest winds, but their migration stopped when clouds moved in for a couple of hours in the afternoon. Both leaders wondered if Broad-wings migrated unseen in the fog or clouds on their respective days. Usually a late October migrant, the majority of Red-shoulders turned up instead between November 4 and 11, producing our second-best tally of 122: 69 adult, 11 immature, and 42 unknown. Matt Zeitler grabbed the best day, November 4, counting a record 27 on light north



winds and destroying Ken Witkowski's old record of 24 from October 27, 2013. Hopefully it's a good sign that most of our three-digit counts of this species have occurred in the last six years. Once again Red-tails failed to move in large numbers before our watch ended on November 15. The 232 recorded was 93% below our 10-year average. Rough-legged Hawks were a no-show for the seventh consecutive fall.

Since 1978 when the watch was extended daily through October and into November, we were rewarded with four-digit tallies of Sharp-shinned Hawks, but not this fall. The 841 counted was 48% below our 10-year average. Our biggest day was 69 on October 20. Compare that to back to back records of 317 and 337 made in late September 1986. Meanwhile, numbers for their larger cousin, the Cooper's Hawk, have been on the rise since 1990. They reached an above average 121, this fall. After a two-year absence, one Goshawk finally turned up, October 18. Ajit wrote that this large-headed accipiter sailed due south, never beating its wings.

The American Kestrel had a mini-rebound from last year's abysmal 52, with 83 counted: 11 male, 23 female, 49 unknown. However, their numbers have been woefully low this entire decade. The 18 Merlin was rather average, but the larger Peregrine Falcon brightened our 60th with two records. On October 11, Ajit recorded 6, nudging out John Tramontano's daily record of 5, counted October 17, 1992. Although we don't get their falcon numbers, we mirrored Montclair's and Hook Mountain's record Peregrine numbers this season, counting 26 and surpassed the 21 counted in 1990. That is excellent news since DDT almost eliminated this species from our landscape by the 1960's.



Osprey numbers bounced back a bit but still came in 38% below their 10-year average at 111. In the 2016 edition of the Northeast Hawk Watch Report, Drew Panko points out that while Osprey breeding has increased, "numbers counted in migration has been decreasing for the last 30 years..." The cause remains a mystery. Why the N. Harrier numbers are reaching rock bottom is not so mysterious, with their habitat of wetlands and fields disappearing at an alarming rate. The 26 logged this fall is pathetic and well below the record 101 logged in 1980. Bald Eagles are on an amazing rebound, especially in the last 10 years. The 85 noted this season (44 adult, 38 immature, and 3 unknown) was above average. Always uncommon in the northeast, the Golden Eagle came in at an average 4: 3 adult, 1 immature.

We did not begin counting Turkey Vultures until the 1980's, and differentiating locals from migrants has always been a challenge. The 320 counted this fall was above average, and so were the 96 Black Vultures. 1985 produced the first Black Vulture ever seen over our lookout, and now they're quite common. Local C. Ravens were with us almost daily with up to 5 counted. 681 Monarch Butterflies surpassed last year's 131, the majority moving between October 3 and 11. Ruby-throated Hummingbirds barely made an appearance with a mere 15 recorded. Denise Farrell noted 3,515 Canada Geese, September 28, as part of our final 10,365 counted between September 28 and November 11. The high Brant count was 95 on November 4, with 146 tallied by season's end, and only 10 Snow Geese showed up, with a single Snow hanging on to the end of a skein of Canadas, November 7. Between October 31 and November 10, 19 C. Loons were observed heading east towards Greenwood Lake.



Other birds of interest included:

- September
- 1 Pine Warbler
 - 2 1st C. Nighthawk (5 more, 9/3 - 9/13), 1st Black-throated Green & Red-eyed Vireo
 - 6 1st Prairie (another 3 on 9/10) & Magnolia Warblers, 1st Scarlet Tanager
 - 7 Cape May Warbler
 - 11 Tennessee Warbler & 2 Am. Redstarts
 - 12 1st DC Cormorant (1 on 9/21 & 14 on 9/28)
 - 18 1st C. Loon
 - 22 59 DC Cormorants (235 on 11/4)
 - 23 1st Yellow-bellied Sapsucker seen through 11/14 (male & immature 11/14)
 - 24 Brown Creeper
 - 27 E. Towhee (another 9/21)
 - 39 Blackpoll, E. Phoebe
- October
- 1 Ovenbird, 1st Ruby-crowned Kinglet
 - 8 14 Chipping Sparrows
 - 16 Great Blue Heron (another 11/4)
 - 17 Nashville Warbler, Field Sparrow, 2 Song Sparrows
 - 21 3 Golden-crowned Kinglets, 3 Dark-eyed Juncos
 - 25 6 Mute Swans (4 adult, 2 immature)
 - 28 Hermit Thrush
- November
- 2 25 E. Bluebirds
 - 4 3 White-crowned Sparrows
 - 5 Red-headed Woodpecker
 - 15 Great Horned Owl heard

What better way to celebrate our 60th consecutive watch than with an official hat, designed and donated by Denise Farrell. Our hats on to Denise! A big thank you to all our friends and visitors who helped with the count, especially Bill Connolly, Rob Stone and Carol Linguanti. Sadly, Carol passed away at the end of October. Carol was the creator of our Facebook page and a dedicated leader. Her enthusiasm and spirit will be missed. A big thank you to our clean-up crew: Denise, Rick Hansen, Rochana Muenthongchin, Beverly Robertson, Gene Tappan, Will Test, and especially Tom Millard who installed our box on the platform. Our deep appreciation to Evan Masten and George Profus, NYDEC Region 3 Foresters who cut some of the larger trees blocking our views before the watch began, and to Mike Limatola and Kurt Muenz and the Fyke Nature Association for providing the insurance required for our Clean-Up day. We are also indebted to Fyke for their continued support, especially for sponsoring our Mount Peter site on Hawkcount.org. We continue as the oldest, continually run, all-volunteer fall watch in the country.



Welcome New Members

Holly Cowen, Hawthorne
Julie and Rocco Fuda, Oakland
Armene and Haig Norian, Allendale



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**Fyke Board of Trustees:**

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Webmaster: Kevin Watson

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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 -- \$20.00; Family -- \$25.00. 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. Editor: Carol Flanagan, carolflana@aol.com. Production: Molly Gardener, Herb Gardener, and Carol Flanagan.

The deadline for the Summer 2016 issue is March 21, 2018. Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to carolflana@aol.com.

