



Fyke Nature Association Fall Newsletter

Vol. 66 — No. 3 — 2020
www.fykenature.org

Due to Corona virus restrictions, member meetings will be online on Zoom, and a link will be sent out in advance. If you are not registered 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.

Dues notice:

Fyke dues for September 1, 2020 to August 31, 2021 is due now, \$20 for an individual, and \$25 for a family. 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.



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.

September 5 to November 13, 2020 – State Line Hawk Watch.

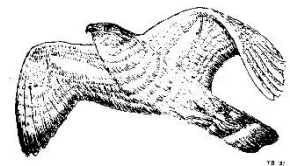
Meet at the State Line lookout in Alpine between 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. This site has easy access and parking. Here is a chance to look down at migrating hawks. From September through early November, volunteer observers record the migration of raptors from the lookout point, volunteer availability and weather conditions permitting. Check Facebook [State Line Hawk Watch](#) before you go. The lookout can draw a crowd on a beautiful autumn day.



© Jim Wright

September 1 to November 15, 2020 – Mount Peter Hawk Watch, Judith Cinquina

The 63rd annual fall hawk watch on Mount Peter will begin September 1 and go through November 15, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. However, this year we will be practicing social distancing. Everyone is invited, but please be aware that our platform is very narrow and not that long, and we must limit occupancy to a few observers. Unfortunately, hawk spotting below the platform is very restricted by tall trees, but migrants overhead and some out in the valley can be enjoyed.



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.

**September 25, 2020, Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., online via Zoom
Iceland, Kevin Watson**

Birder and photographer Kevin Watson takes us on a tour of this unique island, with its dramatic landscapes and remarkable bird life. We'll see majestic waterfalls, black sand beaches, glaciers and blue ice caves in winter, and return for the endless daylight of mid-summer, when the skies around the seabird cliffs are full of gulls and alcids, and the rivers and lakes are home to many nesting ducks and shorebirds in full breeding plumage.

October 11, 2020, Sunday – The Big Sit! at the Celery Farm

The Big Sit! is an annual, international, noncompetitive birding event. Our team, The Celery Stalkers, sits in a circle 17 feet in diameter for 24 hours counting all the bird species we see or hear. The center of our circle is the Pirie-Mayhood Tower. Teams will be limited to three people to insure social distancing. See the rules of The Big Sit

<https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/connect/bigsit/rules.php>

To sign up for a 2-hour team contact Carol Flanagan, carolflana@aol.com.

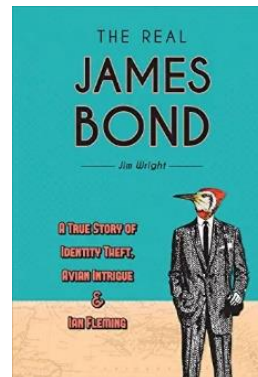


October 18, 2020, Sunday – Field Trip: Ducks at Dusk

Meet at the Celery Farm Warden's Watch at 5:30 p.m. To register contact Mike Limatola, mike.limatola@gmail.com.

**October 23, 2020, Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., online via Zoom
Spies and the Real James Bond, Jim Wright**

With the 007 movie just a month away, the Fyke Nature Association's Jim Wright will talk about his popular new book, "The Real James Bond" His illustrated talk will feature exotic birds, real spies, Ian Fleming, 007 and lots of other fascinating stuff. The book is available as a hard-cover (you can buy or borrow a copy at Lee Memorial Library) and an eBook. You can read more about all of this at www.realjamesbond.net



**December 4, 2020, Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., Tentative at the Allendale Municipal Building
Members Night, Kurt Muenz**

Please come and enjoy an evening of short presentations by Fyke Members or better yet, be a presenter and share your own photos, prints, collections, stories, etc. Information on submitting digital presentations will be in the winter Fyke newsletter.



Hawkwatching during a pandemic

Hawkwatching has the potential to be one of the lower-risk activities for the public to enjoy but hawkwatching with others increases the risk of coronavirus transmission. HMANA encourages all hawkwatchers to be cautious when interacting with others and to adhere to all policies of individual hawk sites. By following these guidelines we not only decrease the chances of getting sick or infecting others, but may increase the likelihood of hawkwatch sites opening to the public.

HMANA's Top Ten Guidelines for Visiting a Hawk Watch in Autumn 2020

- 1) Before traveling to a hawk watch, check the state and county policies for travel restrictions. If the guidelines recommend staying at home, then please do so!
- 2) Check to see if the hawkwatch site is open to the public by visiting their website. We also recommend checking their latest data at HawkCount.org. Most sites will have a statement in the Visitors dialog box. Remember, that while the hawk site may be counting hawks, they may not be open to the public.
- 3) If the hawk site is open to the public, please read and follow their rules and regulations.
- 4) If you feel sick, have a fever, or have been exposed to other people that are sick, then please do not visit the hawk site.
- 5) While the probability of dogs transmitting the virus is currently thought to be low, consider leaving your pet at home. If you do take them, please keep your dog leashed and away from others.
- 6) When at the site, always wear a mask and maintain a distance of at least six feet from one another, and if possible, stay even farther apart as wind may carry infectious particles greater distances.
- 7) Counters are being encouraged to isolate themselves from others at hawkwatches. Please respect the work of the counter and do not enter their space or touch their equipment.
- 8) If a visitor section is designated, please stay there and model social distancing.
- 9) If using the portable sanitation facility, please use disinfecting wipes on the door handles after you leave. Also use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- 10) Please err on the side of caution and thank you for being extra vigilant!

<https://www.hmana.org/hawkwatching-during-a-pandemic/>

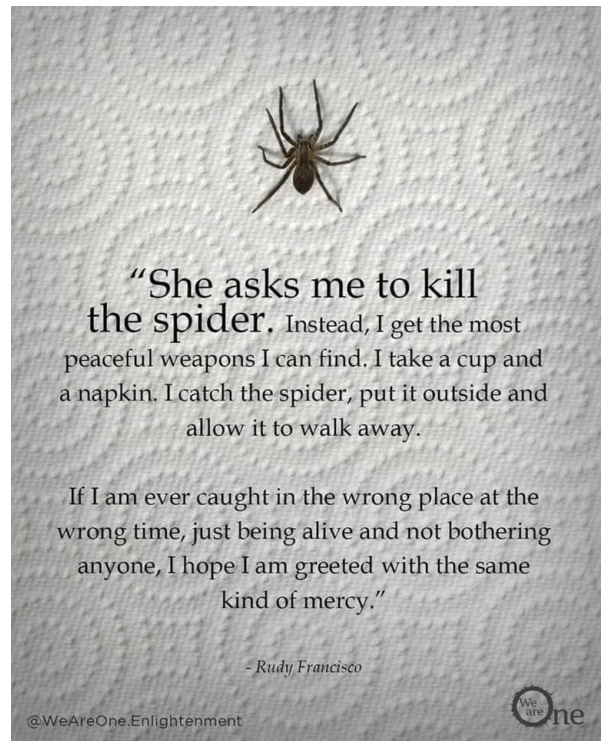
Welcome New Members

Dr. Steven J. Fishman and family, Saddle River
Susan Holmberg, Mahwah
Sheldon Krause and Family, Monsey, New York
Neil McGonigle and Family, Midland Park
Lindsay McNamara, Bloomfield
Laurie Neu and Family, Montvale
Heidi Petri, Park Ridge
Stephanie Swanzey and Family, Bergenfield
Tom White, Allendale
Leslie Young, Bergenfield



Spider Article Follow-up By Carol Flanagan

Something happened after Judy Cinquina's article about spiders was published in the last newsletter. I also do not kill spiders in my home, they are scooped up in a cup and let free outside. I was brushing my teeth and saw a spider walk into the sink. I quick turned off the water and grabbed my cup to catch it. I forgot I had water in the cup and the poor spider went down the drain. As I was standing there feeling so guilty, don't you know the spider came back up out of the drain. I took him outside to freedom! The song "itsy bitsy spider" was going through my mind the rest of the day!!



An Eagle Scout Project for The Celery Farm

Colin Hascup of Allendale has received Scout approval for his Celery Farm project. Colin is installing an informational sign with a viewing area at the Celery Farm. He will also be doing some trail and plant restoration.

Boy Scout Councils are permitting prospective Eagle Scouts to use online funding campaigns to cover the cost of their Eagle projects. For more details check out [Colin's GoFundMe page](#). Please consider a donation via that page noting that any funds donated in excess of the project's cost will go to Fyke for Celery Farm use.

Flash Dance By Judy Cinquina

Birding is a mixture of luck and always having your birdometer on alert. On May 16, while bored with confinement, I scoured my yard for spring migrants and came up empty. Nothing in my birdbath, although my dripper was active and inviting, and even common birds were elsewhere. I gave up and turned to housework. Suddenly, at 11:15 a.m., I glanced out the window and spotted a Chestnut-sided Warbler on my patio. That was peculiar in itself. A Chestnut-sided in my birdbath, yes, but on my patio? I opened the back door quietly and enjoyed its golden crown and the golden wash on its wings and back. Then it was joined by a Magnolia. I had yet to realize something was actually exploding right in front of my eyes. But the birds knew. How they all arrived at once, and from where when no one was anywhere near my yard just an hour before, I'll never know. Maybe they have a telepathic form of texting that ornithologists haven't discovered yet.

One minute I had two warblers, and the next, the backyard vibrated with golds, and iridescent chartreuse, chestnut, and deep blues. White tail spots flashed on and off in the sun as warblers alighted in shrubs or on the patio and took off again. It was as if someone had tossed jewels into the air. I was so mesmerized by the display that I barely noticed the cause. A Mayfly-type insect had hatched right on my patio. I'm not near water, and the cause of the gossamer cloud irrupting here and now shall remain a mystery. But the warblers knew they were here and were grabbing them on the patio and in the air. They were all low or at eye level. I stepped out the door and just watched. N. Parula, and a Yellow-rumped with its buttery taillight, two Bay-breasted males, Black-throated Blue, Black-throated Green, Redstart, and Canada. I probably missed a couple of species in the melee. It lasted for about one hour, and then they vanished. If I hadn't glanced out the window & spotted the Chestnut-sided, I would have missed the whole show.



The Screech-Owl That Couldn't Give a Hoot! By COOx2 1 Nov '09

They call me "Screech" – Ever wonder Why?
I guess you've never heard my cry.
It's not a hymn or monk-like chant-
It's more-or-less a haunting rant.

But I've got two other calls you know-
The first's a lilting tremolo.
The second's like a horse's whinny-
Starts out loud but then gets skinny.

And if you like the way I "sing"-
You'd love to see me on-the-wing.
I'm not a speedy, flying riot-
I make my living being quiet.

With feathers soft and talons bright-
I feed on critters of the night.
Bugs and birds and long-tailed mice-
Make a diet short on spice.

My housing needs are very few-
A box or hollow tree will do.
Yet if you want me near your house-
Best to check first with your spouse.

For sometimes I leave a meal half eaten-
And you don't want her on you beatin'.
'Cause if you get the sudden "boot"-
I'll try but I can't give a Hoot!



Otus asio

Field and Feeder Notes By Judith Cinquina

The strikingly feathered Golden-Winged Warbler — which weighs about three pennies and measures the width of a hand — has suffered a steep decline through its breeding range in the Highlands. There were 100 pairs in the Highlands in the 1990s, but now there are only about 25 pairs.

~ “Rare warbler, the reason for controversial forest clearing, shows up on Sparta Mountain,” Scruton, Bruce A., northjersey.com, July 1, 2020

Fyke members are fortunate to live so near Sterling Forest, NY where Golden-winged Warblers have nested for the last half century under the power lines that run through the forest. Ground nesters, they thrive in young forests with a lush shrubby understory, offering concealment and abundant insect dining.

Tranquility Ridge off Beech Road in Passaic County is the only close New Jersey site that also supports Golden-wings. Unfortunately, the species is disappearing in both states as young forests with abundant undergrowth are gobbled up by development or become mature. The Golden-winged Tom Mitchell spotted in Ringwood at Skylands Botanical Gardens on May 13 was a lucky find. One occupied territory there from May through June 1989, but none has been reported since until now. The species was a “lifer” for Tom and, he wrote, “so cooperative!” It sang and posed on willow shoots. His close-up photo captured a male in gray with a coal-black mask and throat and a stunning golden crown and wings. Its first cousin, the Blue-winged Warbler has a bright yellow head and underparts, blue-gray wings, white wingbars and a thick black eyeline and looks nothing like its cousin. Yet, their looks deceive you. In fact “On September 15, 1835, none other than John James Audubon wrote a letter to his friend the Rev. John Bachman, a Lutheran minister and eager naturalist in Charleston, South Carolina, in which Audubon mused that Golden-winged Warblers and Blue-winged Warblers might be the same species.” (Quote from Gustave Axelsson, Summer 2016 Living Bird magazine.) Over a century and a half later, ornithologists have discovered Audubon was on to something. The two species have the same DNA.



© Tom Mitchell

That doesn't mean that Tom's “lifer” isn't real. The two became isolated several million years ago. Even though their DNA hasn't changed, their Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), which is passed from mother to daughter, reveals that the Golden-winged has been isolated long enough to begin passing down mutations from generation to generation, and the cousins now look completely different. Their songs are very similar though, and they do interbreed where the two species meet, creating the rare Brewster's and even rarer Lawrence's hybrids. Both hybrids have been found in Sterling Forest. So, Tom's bird may have had a Blue-winged or two on its family tree, but you'd never guess it from that black throat and stunning golden crown in Tom's photo.

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Congratulations to all the Fyke members who reported the first Palms of spring, along with Tennessee, Blackburnian, Canada, Black-throated Blue and Green, N. Parula and many other warblers this spring. Glad you were all out there enjoying the colorful parade. Bay-breasted Warblers created a lot of excitement in May. This stocky warbler is not as frisky as most warblers and the breeding male is noted for its chestnut or bay colored crown, face and sides, set off by a black mask and creamy panels either side of its neck, and unlike most warblers hasn't a spot of yellow anywhere in its plumage. Betty McDonnell was delighted to find one at

eye level in NJ Audubon's Baldwin property in Mahwah, May 12. The next day, Lisa Potash photographed another nearby at Halifax. Two days later, Doug Morel noted two males perched side by side there, and the 16th produced two more males perched side by side in my Upper Saddle River yard. Mark Kantrowitz also enjoyed one in Hillsdale the next day. Bay-breasteds breed in Canada's boreal forests, but there are many springs when birders search in vain for a glimpse of this handsome migrant. Dunn and Garrett state in their Peterson Warbler Guide, 1997, Bay-breasteds exploit spruce budworm outbreaks, and "their numbers fluctuate greatly from year to year depending on prey availability." I remember the 1970's when they were almost common. When they discard their breeding finery in the fall however, they resemble fall Blackpolls and Pine Warblers and are a challenge even for experienced birders.

Awards for the best sightings include two species spotted at Halifax, May 17 by Doug Morel, a Mourning Warbler and an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Boyle in his Birds of NJ, 2011 states that the Mourning is the "most sought-after" spring migrant warbler and uncommon. A skulker in dense thickets, it is often heard but not seen. It slightly resembles a female Common Yellowthroat but has a gray hood and black throat that extends into its upper chest and yellow underparts. Olive-sideds breed north of us from northern New York into Canada and west but "have declined dramatically in recent decades," Boyle tells us. He labels the flycatcher a "scarce" migrant. Larger than a Phoebe, with similar coloring but with a peaked crown, dark vest and yellow lower mandible, the Olive-sided often shows off the white tufts on either side of its rump from perches high atop dead snags. Kudos to Doug for two rare finds.

An American Bittern is rather expected at the Celery Farm (CF), but is rarely reported at Mary Patrick Park in Mahwah. Lucky Doug and Brian Kenney observed one there May 16 and 17. The sole report of Marsh Wren was two at the CF, July 22 by Mike Limatola. He wrote, "Sue and I saw two last night, between the Butterfly Garden and Pink Potty Bridge," and that's where they saw one last year. Aside from the Meadowlands, the CF is one of the few sites that attract this tiny breeder in the Fyke area. The sole Bobolink report from the CF was from Brian Kenny, July 26. More could arrive any day, for they are beginning to gather for their long trip to wintering grounds as far south as Argentina in South America. Lisa Safier, who lives at the edge of the CF, wrote that she had seen a couple of Brown Thrashers in the CF area all summer. Other than one sighting at Mary Patrick Park July 25, that is the only sighting of Brown Thrashers reported in our area this spring/summer. They are disappearing along with the overgrown fields they require.

Apologies to anyone who hasn't chosen to receive Fyke members' messages. Many gorgeous photos were posted this spring/summer and were well worth the free subscription. The new digital cameras capture amazing shots but they require artistic talent to set them up, and we certainly have some of that among Fyke members. Belted Kingfisher photos are normally not show-stoppers, but Alan Pomerantz made it a star with his photo from the Hour on the Tower, July 19. His female Kingfisher had a bright rusty chest (a male's chest is white), a messy hairdo, slate blue plumage, and a brilliant white spot above her eye. When a kingfisher feels threatened, it can erect its white spots so they stand out, so perhaps her wide-open bill and prominent spots indicated a confrontation with something unseen by the camera. But there was also something in the photo I had never noticed before. Alan's perfectly focused close-up revealed tiny white pearls dotting the edges of her wing coverts and primary feathers. It was definitely a gem of a photo.



© Alan Pomerantz

And how many times have you walked up to a Black-billed Cuckoo posing, eye level and in the full sun? On May 20, Richard Lynn did just that in Franklin Lakes. The bird seemed “very unusual to me for around here,” he wrote. And usually it is. Cuckoos turn up during years when caterpillars abound and some years they’re not noticed at all. Richard caught its black, decurved bill glinting in the sun and red orbital ring standing out against its overall gray plumage. As rare as that encounter seems to this birder, Alice Leurck had a similar encounter with one at Mary Patrick Park, May 26. She managed to snap a series of portraits, eye-level, as the cuckoo hunted for and captured its favorite caterpillar prey.



© Richard Lynn

An adult Black-crowned Night-Heron posed for a photo at the CF, June, 24. Buddy Jenssen was the composer of this stunning shot featuring a long white plume running down the heron’s black crown and back and a red eye ring set against its pear-gray face and body.



© Buddy Jenssen

Brian Jenkins found conditions still enough at the CF to grab a series of reflections in Lake Appert in July. He wrote, “A Great Blue Heron chose to land in the perfect spot to provide a double image of his graceful descent.” Those also were eye candy.



© Brian Jenkins



© Brian Jenkins

Our eyes were focused on birds in and around our yards during our confinement. Betty McDonnell counted six E. Phoebes on a walk through her Mahwah property, March 25. Right before our state parks closed down, Rochana Muenthongchin found a Hermit Thrush at Skylands Manor in Ringwood, April 8. The 15th brought another Hermit to Glen Rock. Kurt Muenz wrote, “This sheltering in place hermit fittingly observed a Hermit Thrush.” That Hermit was a first for his yard. On April 16, Mike Buckley observed that a Downy Woodpecker “regularly enjoyed” the nectar in his hummingbird feeder in Allendale. On April 21, Jim Wright spotted a DC Cormorant fly past his Allendale window, while Loren Anderson observed an Osprey, fish in tow, fly by in Oakland. Carol Flanagan was first to note an E. Towhee in her Hawthorne yard, April 22. That same day, Doug Morel and Betty McDonnell both had an adult Bald Eagle over their Mahwah homes.

A Screech Owl provided some wonderful confinement hours of observation to Lisa Potash in Oakland. She wrote on April 25, “This afternoon I was on the back porch and noticed a couple of Cardinals giving alarm notes in the low, scruffy tree line off the backyard lawn.

Scanned to find a red morph Screech positioned against a good sized tree trunk, barely five feet off the ground.” Well, that red Screech turned out to be a male, who attracted a gray female, and eventually the pair settled into Lisa’s two owl boxes. On May 23, she confirmed that the pair had produced at least two owlets, and later discovered three. On the 26th, she wrote, “I was able to watch one owlet flutter down and out of the box. Thrilling!” A walk around the yard that afternoon produced no sign of the family. She wrote, “I will keep my eyes & ears open, and hope these next crucial weeks go well for them as I’m emotionally attached to them all!”

Another pair of Screech Owls investigated Mark Kantrowitz’s fish pond in Hillsdale at dusk, May 29. He reported that one perched on pipes supporting the protective netting while the second was nearby. There was a “great amount of chattering and clicking” he wrote. My guess is they were not very happy that the netting prevented them from procuring an easy fish meal, probably for hungry youngsters waiting in a tree cavity somewhere in the area.

Two male Pileated Woodpeckers followed one another from tree to tree in Stephanie Seymour’s Ringwood yard, May 29. Stephanie considered it “weird” behavior, but it was probably a territorial dispute, and one of them was an intruder. While Gaby Schmitt helped clear trails for a few days at the CF before its reopening, she enjoyed watching a pair of Pileateds feeding young in a nest cavity there. She reported that on June 16, the day Mike Limatola announced they had fledged. Mike posted photos of the two nestlings a few days later, a male and a female. On July 22 while I was working in my Upper Saddle River yard, a male Pileated flew in and worked a nearby tree. After some time, I heard another one call from a distance, and the male responded. A while later, I found his mate working on a log in my wooded area. Her daughter was beside her, removing the bark. I spent the next 20 minutes watching the pair and was amused that the fledgling actually had a pinkish crest. Twice the youngster stopped working and waited for her mom to feed her grubs harvested from the log. I have to admit, observing that Mom’s long, thick bill plunging into her fledgling’s throat was a bit difficult to watch.



Fall presents us with a long time to observe migrants, so get out there and please share whatever you find. In addition to Bobolinks, Common Nighthawks should be migrating right now. 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.



The Grackle **By Ogden Nash**



The grackle's voice is less than mellow,
His heart is black, his eye is yellow,
He bullies more attractive birds
With hoodlum deeds and vulgar words,
And should a human interfere,
Attacks that human in the rear.
I cannot help but deem the grackle
an ornithological debacle.

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!



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Webmaster:	Kevin Watson

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 contact Mike Limatola, President, mike.limatola@gmail.com. The Newsletter is published four times a year and manuscripts and artwork are welcome. Editor: Carol Flanagan, carolflana@aol.com.

The deadline for the Winter 2020 issue is October 21, 2020. Send material to Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446, or via e-mail to carolflana@aol.com.

