

Fyke Nature Association Fall Newsletter

Vol. 69 - No. 3 - 2023www.fykenature.org

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Stiles Thomas (1923-2023)



Dues Notice

Fyke dues for September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024 are due now. Annual dues are \$20 for an individual and \$25 for a family. You can pay online at www.fykenature.org, or by check to Fyke Nature Association 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 15, 2023 - 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.



September 5 and into the Fall – Mount Peter Hawk Watch

Mount Peter will be conducting a watch primarily on weekdays with some Saturdays this September and into the fall. A shortage of leaders has forced us to cut back somewhat. Visitors are always welcome. In any case you can enjoy the delicious ice cream at the Creamery below while you relax on our platform.

Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Directions: The Mount Peter Hawk Watch in 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 17A from Route 17N. Follow 17A through Greenwood Lake and up the mountain. At the very top, you will make a right onto Kain Road. Bellvale Farms Creamery (excellent homemade ice cream) will be on your left when you turn. The badly pot-holed road to the lookout is a bit further on your right. You can park below and walk up to our lot. The lookout is but a short walk up a set of stairs. (The AT runs right past the lookout.)

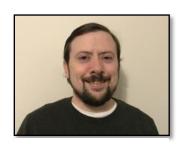
September 22, 2023, Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., online via Zoom What's Growing Inside The Celery Farm's Deer Exclosure?

Mike Lefebvre

After four years of the deer exclosure protecting a patch of woods inside the 107-acre Celery Farm, it's time to take a look at the flora growing there in the absence of deer grazing.



Deer exclosures are used as best practices in forest management when white-tailed deer browsing becomes an issue. The deer enclosure helps to protect, establish and increase regeneration of native plants.



Mike Lefebvre

Plant identification expert and Fyke Nature Publicity Chair Mike Lefebvre will take us inside the deer exclosure for a look at the forest understory.

October 1, 2020: 8:30-3pm Meadowlands Birding Festival

This year's Meadowlands Birding Festival promises an engaging, fun and educational day of bird walks and presentations, a live raptor show, children's activities, music, information tables and more.

The Keynote Speaker is Dr. Jill Deppe, Senior Director, Migratory Bird Initiative of the National Audubon Society.

The Meadowlands Environment Center is located at 2 DeKorte Park Plaza, Lyndhurst, NJ.

October 8, 2023, 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. Observations can only be made within the 17-foot circle. If a bird is seen or heard from within the circle but is too distant to identify, you may leave the circle to get a closer look. Any new bird species seen or heard while

out of the circle cannot be counted unless it is seen or heard by someone in the circle, or you see it again when you return to the circle.

To sign up for a 2–3-hour team, contact Carol Flanagan, <u>carolflana@aol.com</u>.



October 27, 2023, Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m., online via Zoom Cowbirds: Villainous Mobsters or Falsely Maligned Native Species? Sarah Winnicki

Brown-headed cowbirds are notorious for their breeding system called "brood parasitism." They lay their eggs in the nests of hundreds of other bird species, forcing those birds to feed their young. They've been painted as dastardly villains, but are they? Biologist, PhD candidate, photographer and birder Sarah Winnicki walks us through the biology of cowbirds, paying close attention to their research on the ways they interact with their host species in their native range in Kansas.



Sarah Winnicki





December 1, 2023, Friday – Monthly Meeting: 8:00 p.m.

Members Night

Kurt Muenz

Enjoy an evening of short presentations via Zoom by Fyke Members. Better yet, be a presenter and share your own photos. Information on submitting images will be posted on the Fyke Email List early in October.

Stepping Up For The Celery Farm

By Gabriele Schmitt

28. Downy Woodpecker

WOW! WOW! WOW! 86 species is our total for 2023!

My sincere thanks to all of you who came out May 6 and 7 to count the bird species for our annual Celery Farm fundraiser. We had beautiful blue skies and warm, springtime temperatures. The birds showed up and I'm pleased to share the list with you:

1. Canada Goose	29. Hairy Woodpecker	57. House Sparrow
2. Wood Duck	30. Northern Flicker	58. House Finch
3. Mallard	31. Eastern Wood-Pewee	59. Purple Finch
4. Common Merganser	32. Least Flycatcher	60. American Goldfinch
5. Rock Pigeon (Feral	33. Eastern Phoebe	61. Chipping Sparrow
Pigeon)	34. Eastern Kingbird	62. White-throated Sparrow
6. Mourning Dove	35. Yellow-throated Vireo	63. Song Sparrow
7. Chimney Swift	36. Blue-headed Vireo	64. Swamp Sparrow
8. Virginia Rail	37. Warbling Vireo	65. Eastern Towhee
9. Killdeer	38. Blue Jay	66. Baltimore Oriole
10. Spotted Sandpiper	39. American Crow	67. Red-winged Black
11. Solitary Sandpiper	40. Fish Crow	68. Brown-headed Cowbird
12. Double-crested Cormorant	41. Black-capped Chickadee	69. Common Grackle
13. American Bittern	42. Tufted Titmouse	70. Ovenbird
14. Great Blue Heron	43. Northern Rough-winged	71. Northern Waterthrush
15. Great Egret	Swallow	72. Blue-winged Warbler
16. Green Heron	44. Tree Swallow	73. Black-and-white
	45. Barn Swallow	Warbler
17. Black-crowned Night- Heron	46. Ruby-crowned Kinglet	74, Common Yellowthroat
18. Black Vulture	47. White-breasted	75. American Redstart
19. Turkey Vulture	Nuthatch	76. Northern Parula
20. Osprey	48. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	77. Yellow Warbler
21. Cooper's Hawk	49. House Wren	78. Chestnut-sided Warbler
22. Bald Eagle	50. Carolina Wren	79. Black-throated Blue
23. Red-shouldered Hawk	51. European Starling	Warbler
24. Broad-winged Hawk	52. Gray Catbird	80. Palm Warbler
25. Red-tailed Hawk	53. Northern Mockingbird	81. Pine Warbler
26. Belted Kingfisher	54. Veery	82. Yellow-rumped Warbler
27. Red-bellied Woodpecker	55. Wood Thrush	83. Prairie Warbler
2). Red belied Woodpecker	56. American Robin	84. Black-throated Green

Warbler

85. Northern Cardinal

86. Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Great birds! Awesome birders!

John Workman



Thanks to all our donors we raised \$2,830. The funds raised will be used for the continued maintenance and enhancements at The Celery Farm:

Gloria Antaramian	Mimi Brauch	Dale Brittle
Judy Cinquina	Phil Dahlen	Bill Drummond
Patty Finn/Jim Wright	Carol Flanagan	Molly Gardener
Tom Jaeger	Enid Hayflick	Brian Kenny
Dorothy Ladwig	Darlene Lembo	Ronnie Levine
Pat Linard	Eleanor McKenzie	Becky Meister
Tom Mitchell	Doug Morel	Rochana Muenthongchin
Kurt Muenz	Crista Murphy	Heidi Petri
Alan Pomerantz	Lisa Potash	Marty Prince
Janna Ross	Hans Sammer	Gabriele Schmitt
Stephanie Swanzey	Sally Teschon	Roy Verstraete
Charley West	Cindy Waneck	Penny Whitlock

Field and Feeder Notes

By Judith Cinquina

When I arrived (at Warwick Brook Road) one Red-headed Woodpecker was on the nest tree calling. I watched it for 15–20 minutes as it moved to different trees but did not see a second woodpecker. At one point I looked left, and to my horror...saw its partner lying motionless on its back in the middle of the road. I immediately rushed to it and was so glad when I felt it clutch my finger. It was still alive! I wasn't sure what happened. It wasn't there minutes ago. I drove the bird to a rehabber who quickly discovered the woodpecker was egg bound. She was cleaned and given meds and extra warmth and was quite alert. She made it through the night but passed away later. The infection caused by the egg(s) breaking inside her must have been too great. Very, very sad for that beautiful girl.

Jeanne Cimorelli, Orange County, NY birder, eBird, May 24, 2023

Charley West discovered the Red-headed Woodpecker two days later, on May 26. He explained that he was traveling on Warwick Brook Road from Route 17, a route he frequently takes when birding Sterling Forest. He continued, "I always stop (approximately ¼ mile up; from Route 17) at the first 'pond' on the left...I heard a strange call, so I hit my Merlin app, and it identified the Red-headed Woodpecker right away." Before Charley could decide what to do, two Redheaded Woodpeckers flew across the road and landed 20 feet in front of him on a dead tree near the pond. The "pond" was created by beaver who dammed up Warwick Brook, flooding

the area and drowning some of the trees and providing ample housing for woodpeckers and other cavity breeders. The beavers are probably gone, and as Charley wrote, "the beaver lodge is high and dry." Alan Pomeranz visited the site and showed me a photo he took of the male, so on June 16, I checked it out. I found the male on the barkless tree alongside the road making harsh "querr" calls. The tree had at least two perfectly round holes where the pair had probably intended to nest. Having already learned about his partner's demise, I thought the male was just missing his absent mate. Obviously, I didn't read Charley's account very closely.



Red-headed Woodpecker Alan Pomerantz

On June 18, another birder reported three Red-headed Woodpeckers at the tree, one inside a cavity, two outside on the tree, but it wasn't until mid-July that anyone observed adults bringing in food. On July 19, I found one adult in the cavity and the second, probably a male, flew in with a large insect. I could see parts of the insect flying here and there as he pounded it in a nearby tree. A Jay flew in, and the male promptly left and didn't return to the cavity with the food until the Jay was occupied with a wrathful Robin. The second adult, probably the female, stayed in the cavity a couple of times. Three times I saw her return to the tree, but as much as I tried, I failed to see her access the cavity. I even checked to see if there was a backdoor! She just seemed to melt away and turn up inside later. Through my scope, I noted many distant dead trees with perfectly round cavities, and I suspect Red-heads have been nesting here for some time. Perhaps that was the reason the male attracted a new mate in a mere two days. Although I was determined to be there when young appeared, I returned too

late. In spite of other Fyke members and Orange County birders checking in often, we all missed the big day. How many woodpeckers fledged, if any, shall remain a mystery.

The Red-headed Woodpecker used to be more common in the Northeast but has declined, primarily for lack of nest sites and habitat. They don't nest in boxes. Bull's Birds of NY State, 1998 states that this woodpecker prefers two distinct habitat types: along streams, especially containing beaver ponds like Warwick Brook Road or open country with extensive grasslands, scattered trees and small woodlots. They eat insect larvae, fruit, and often, like a flycatcher, fly out after insects. They have been known to frequent feeders for seeds and suet, as Maryann Fahey discovered. On May 14, she had a Red-headed Woodpecker visit her peanut feeder twice in Washington Township. That was the only other Red-headed 2023 report in the Fyke area. It's considered a "Threatened Species" in NJ but not in NY.

Doug Morel discovered a singing Prothonotary Warbler at Mary Patrick Park in Mahwah, June 6. Many Fyke birders and others enjoyed looking at this dazzling burnished gold warbler with its coal black eyes, bill and wings. This species seems to glow from within and lights up the dank swamps and wet woods where it breeds in tree cavities. Two days later, its mate was noted. On the 10th , Loren Anderson found the pair and wrote," We could see where the male kept going back to with food, and that was roughly where the female showed when we saw her." The observers kept their distance and didn't manage to see a nest,



Prothonotary Warbler Loren Anderson

but Loren did note a broken off trunk covered in probably poison ivy where the female would occasionally appear. Loren wrote: "The male was bopping all over the place looking for food and singing away." His singing post was a nearby willow surrounded by very shallow, slow to not moving water. Also present that day, Lisa Potash added that the male was very territorial and chased both a chickadee and a cuckoo from the area. Although many birders monitored the pair through early July, no one observed fledglings. According to Boyle (Birds of NJ, 2011), "central NJ is the northern limit of their breeding range on the eastern seaboard." This pair was certainly a good deal north of that limit.

A Yellow-throated Warbler was a one-day wonder at the Celery Farm, April 12. Found by Daniel Carola and photographed by others, it didn't stick around. Daniel pointed out that last year's Yellow-throated turned up April 14. And once again, it was the albilora subspecies or white-lored form that breeds in bottomland forest containing large sycamore trees. Here in northern NJ, its population is concentrated around Bull's Island. Daniel also bagged Palm, Pine and Yellow-rumped Warblers that same day at the Celery Farm. John Coyle discovered a colorful female Wilson's Phalarope in DeKorte's shorebird pool May 13 and 22 in Lyndhurst. This needle-billed shorebird migrates through the Great Plains and is very rare along the East Coast. They breed in grassy wetlands in the Northwest. A male Wilson's Phalarope was observed on the Celery Farm mudflats by Doug Morel and Neil MacLennan, June 6. It was first spotted by Fred Weber who also found one last fall on the same mudflats. Notice the time difference in the female and male sightings. Unlike most shorebirds, females, who are more colorful and larger than their mates, tend to precede males on the spring migration. They also leave the plainer, more camouflaged male to tend the eggs and chicks and may recruit another male to raise another brood. This role reversal works for all phalaropes. Halifax Road in

Mahwah produced some unique flycatchers this spring. Brian Kenney bagged a Yellow-bellied Flycatcher there, May 20. Four days later, John Coyle observed one at DeKorte in the Nature Preserve. Both birders noted olive/green upperparts with, according to John, "yellow on its throat, breast and belly," Brian's flycatcher sang and was confirmed by Merlin. An Olive-sided Flycatcher turned up at Halifax on the 21st, a day later than its appearance last year. This one hung around until the 24th when Lisa Potash observed it actively flycatching from one side of the Ramapo River to another. She noted its large head, short tail and the white tufts on either side of its rump. As it did last year, an Alder Flycatcher turned up the same day as the Olive-sided. Doug Morel found it was still there on the 26th.

Kudos to Stephanie Seymour. She put in 251 hours counting spring hawk migrants from her Ringwood backyard, from mid-February through May and tallied 47 Bald Eagles and 1,215 Broad-winged Hawks and produced a final count of 1,876 raptors. She calls her lookout The Purple Chickadee, and her spring and fall results can be accessed anytime at Hawkcount.org. John Coyle put in five hours and 10 minutes on June 20 and hiked 8.5 miles in Ramapo Valley County Reservation and tallied 42 species, primarily around Bear Swamp Lake. Highlights included: 2 Woodcock, 2 Great-horned Owls "hooting back and forth around the lake," 30 Redeyed Vireos, 12 Worm-eating Warblers with "one feeding a young Cowbird," 10 Scarlet Tanagers and an Acadian Flycatcher.

John reports that he heard the Acadian Flycatcher give its "Peet-sah" call several times. This member of the Empidonax complex disappeared from northern NJ around 1900, although it continued to breed in the Pine Barrens and wet woodlands and Hemlock groves in south Jersey. In the 70s and early 80s, birders traveled to Bull's Island to see this flycatcher, along with the Yellow-throated Warbler. Since the late 80s, the Acadian has been making a comeback in our area. In addition to Ramapo Reservation, it breeds on the other side of the mountain near Skylands Botanical Garden in Ringwood, Wawayanda State Park, and Sterling Forest in NY, among others.

Amy Griffin and her son encountered Rusty Blackbirds at the Celery Farm, March 27. At least two and possibly four flew up from a little stream near Phair's Pond and settled into a tree over the pond. One posed for Amy, and she managed a photo. Doug Morel scored a rare spring Vesper Sparrow, March 30 in Westwood. Once common in NJ, this sparrow disappeared with the grassy farm fields and is now considered an Endangered Species in NJ. The red "schnozzed" Tower crew, (Charley West's description, not mine!) logged a Caspian Tern with an equally bright red "schnoz," on a cold April 3 at the Celery Farm. Boyle states the few spring migrants seen appear in mid-April to mid-May. But Doug Morel and others spotted another Caspian with a "big carrot bill" at DeKorte, June 18, and on June 29, he observed five more at Piermont Pier in NY.

A Brown Thrasher surprised Alice Leurck along the bike trail behind the Interstate Shopping Mall in Ramsey, April 6. She was bin-less but was alerted by its song and found it "hanging out with other birds, including a Mockingbird, deep in a bush." Mark Kantrowitz reported the first House Wren in Hillsdale, April 16, and Lisa Safer noted one at the Celery Farm butterfly garden, April 22. According to Boyle, the wrens were right on time. Two days later, Lisa's Ruby-throated Hummingbird arrived in Allendale. Betty McDonnell snapped a photo of a male Scarlet Tanager already molting out of his breeding plumage, August 8 in Mahwah. Birds are

already preparing to head south. Although Scarlet Tanagers retain their coal black wings, males can appear quite exotic with patches of bright red, orange, and yellow-olive as they molt. Sometimes there's a bit of white here or there. Eventually, they'll move south to northwestern South America resembling their golden olive females.

Soon the avian traffic going south over the Atlantic flyway will be visible. Hawks will be over the lookouts, warblers will be following the Ramapo and other waterways, and waterfowl will be moving in until lakes and ponds freeze over and force them further south. They'll be going through your yard and local parks.

Please share what you find with all of us at fykenature@groups.io where many of the reports for this column originated or send your observations to me at judycinq@optonline.net.

Website Notes

Tom Mitchell

Birds come to our individual feeders and people come to our organization website, all looking to see what we have provided for them. And so, I offered to put together these Website Notes to complement the Feeder Notes column in the newsletter. It is my honor and privilege to have been primarily responsible for maintaining the website for the past three years as well as adding content and improving functionality. Kevin Watson has been a great help and support.

Our website is the public face of the organization, visited by more than 8,900 people in the past year as of this writing. Almost all of them were looking at our site for the first time. Most visitors landed on the <u>Celery Farm page</u>, which draws more views than all the other pages combined, twice as many as the <u>Home page</u>. I know these things because we can now accurately track activity on our site.

If you are reading this on a cell phone, you are among the almost two-thirds majority of how people are viewing this page. I am not often one of them, but I have enjoyed the challenge of making our website work well for you. Here is <u>an archived snapshot of the Celery Farm page</u> on February 3, 2020, before edits were introduced to accommodate mobile devices. It looks fine on a laptop or desktop screen, but the print is impossibly small on a cell phone.

Happily, that essential improvement has been implemented if you are using a cell phone by enlarging the print and adding an option to hide the sidebar menu (and also adding links to open Google maps for driving directions). Our website is unique with entirely hand-crafted code, but truth be told, I like it this way. For me it is easier to work directly with the code, keeping the look and feel much the same as it has been in the past, rather than rebuilding everything constrained by the limited options of site-builder software. I can do it because I have some skills learned in the past when I developed nonprofit software for a living.

Most importantly, lots of new content has been added, especially to the Celery Farm page, which you can see by comparing what is there now with what was there three years ago. Of special note, pages were added earlier this year for self-guided explorations that can be followed while at the Celery Farm using a cell phone, something that is popular with families who have young children. As of this writing, the <u>exploration page</u> was the second-most-visited

page in the past 30 days after the Celery Farm page. Hopefully, some of these people who enjoy the explorations will decide to join Fyke and perhaps get involved.

The <u>annual bird list</u> of first-of-year sightings at the Celery Farm is another innovation this year, not as an alternative to eBird, but as a way for us to collectively keep first sighting records over time, expecting the information to be useful for citizen science to monitor the impact of climate change. Because the records are stored in our database hosted on our website, we will be able in the future to create various informative reports that our visitors can run.

One of my goals for the website is for it to serve as a repository for all things Fyke, which was the impetus behind adding <u>back issues of the newsletter</u> and <u>calendar photos</u> from past years as well as the <u>Fyke Memorabilia</u> page. The <u>Celery Farm Flora</u> page also serves as a historical record from 2021 that will be a benchmark in the future to monitor the changes that are sure to come.

But the QR codes posted around the Celery Farm are perhaps the most visible change, encouraging visitors on the trails to view certain webpages and explore our website. The QR code to open the map was put up a year ago and gets the most scans, though the QR code for the exploration page is a close second. The QR code for the bird list and the QR code for the calendar photos also attract scans by cell phones. And now the wooden post by the Stiles Thomas plaque has a QR code on it that opens the page About Stiles. As of this writing, QR codes were scanned 131 times in the past 30 days.

I hope you approve of the changes to our website. I welcome suggestions for additions and improvements. You can email me at explore@fykenature.org.

Giving Back

By Tom Mitchell

George found the link I put on the website Sending a message to ask to help With whatever needs to be done taking care Of the place he has enjoyed for many years

Wanting to give back now he is able
To provide for those who walk these paths
To find respite in a nature preserve
Where regular trail maintenance is needed

An offer welcomed in responses by Gaby and Jim And Jim soon paired him up with Bruce Who mows and mulches by the mile Happy to have George trim the phragmites There are many more people who tend to this place Volunteers including Neil who I see often Practicing a form of community gardening Each contributing what they can

Like the woman I spoke to who comes every day Bringing a watering can to the butterfly garden Nurturing the flowers as her personal project Nameless because I did not ask her

And Fred who has planted so much over the years Seeking no recognition for his labor of love Quietly going about his self-assigned tasks As does everyone who keeps this place up

If I see some litter a thoughtless person dropped And it won't fit in my pocket or is too filthy I wish I had brought a small trash bag along But the next time I pass it is always gone

And then I thank the unseen picker-uppers
Who do what they do as a sign of respect
For this place that belongs to all of us who cherish
The wildlife habitat sanctuary protected here





Welcome New Members

Tom and Amy Bevacqua, Saddle River George Karelitsky, Ridgewood Donald McNeil, Bergenfield Gary Tiedens and Family, Oakland Cindy Waneck, Oakland

Fyke Board of Trustees: Chairpersons:

President: Mike Limatola Celery Farm: Mike Limatola

First Vice President: Gabriele Schmitt Gabriele Schmitt

Second Vice President: Sue Dougherty Jim Wright

Treasurer: Kurt Muenz Conservation: Gabriele Schmitt

Recording Secretary: Gloria Antaramian Programs: Monica Cardoza

Corresponding Secretary: Mimi Brauch Newsletter: Crista Trippodi Murphy

Trustees: Darlene Lembo Publicity: Mike Lefebvre

Doug Moral Webmasters: Kevin Watson

Open Tom Mitchell

Hawk Watch: Judith Cinquina

The Fyke Nature Association, a 501 (c) (3) organization, meets eight times a year.

These are the meeting dates for 2023 and 2024. All meetings are on Fridays.

September 22, 2023

October 27, 2023

November - no meeting

December 1, 2023

June - no meeting

July - no meeting

August - no meeting

January 26, 2024

September 27, 2024

February 23, 2024 October 25, 2024

March 22, 2024 November – no meeting

April 26, 2024 December 6, 2024

May 17, 2024

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 Fyke Nature Association 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 Winter 2023 issue is October 18, 2023. Send material via e-mail to crista430@gmail.com or Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446.