



Fyke Nature Association

Fall Newsletter

Vol. 71 — No. 3 — 2024

www.fykenature.org

Dues Notice

Prompt Payment Appreciated

Fyke dues for September 1, 2024 to August 31, 2025 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.

Programs*

Since mid-2015 Fyke's monthly speaker costs have been funded by a generous grant from the Winifred M. and George P. Pitkin Foundation.

Friday, September 27, 2024 - Monthly Meeting, 8 PM via Zoom

Find More Birds, with Heather Wolf, author of *Find More Birds: 111 Surprising Ways to Spot Birds Wherever You Are*



Join Heather Wolf, author of *Find More Birds: 111 Surprising Ways to Spot Birds Wherever You Are*, as she shares tips on bird-finding close to home and beyond, as well as ways to witness more of the fascinating bird behaviors and drama we all want to see! You'll be amazed at the information she presents, as well as her fantastic photography.

Heather is a Brooklyn-based birder, photographer, educator. She works for Cornell Lab of Ornithology as a web developer for sites including eBird and BirdCast. Heather teaches birding classes at Brooklyn Botanic Garden and leads educational bird walks for Brooklyn Bridge Park, Washington Square Park Eco Projects, and more. She blogs her photos at brooklynbridgebirds.com.

Registration is required for this program. A link to register can be found under Programs on fykenature.org.

Heather Wolf, author, birder, photographer

Friday, October 25, 2024 - Monthly Meeting, 8 PM, live at the Allendale Municipal Building, 500 W. Crescent Ave., Allendale

Sustaining Wildlife in Fall and Winter Gardens, Deb Ellis of the Native Plant Society of NJ

Learn which flowers and shrubs can serve as a home and food source for pollinators and birds in fall and winter, as well as how to modernize fall cleanup.

Deb Ellis is the founder and leader of the Essex chapter of the Native Plant Society of New Jersey, a Master

* Information is accurate at the time of printing. Please check The Fyke Nature Association Home for any updates.

Gardener, a Rutgers Environmental Steward, and formerly served on the Montclair Environmental Commission. A retired social justice lawyer, she was named a Champion of Change by the Obama White House in 2011. Deb credits her love of gardening to her dad, Homer, who planted wildflowers with her when she was a girl, and her mom, Loismary, who made them into beautiful bouquets.



We look forward to seeing everyone at this live presentation. (It will be taped and posted to the Fyke Nature website under Programs at fykenature.org.)

American goldfinch eating sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*)

Events & Field Trips

The Big Sit! at the Celery Farm- Sunday, October 13, 2024

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, carolflana@aol.com.

Mt. Peter Hawk Watch- September 3 - November 15, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

Get under the Atlantic Flyway this fall and witness the southbound spectacle of raptors and songbirds. Mount Peter has reserved a spot just for you with views of the Warwick Valley clear out to the Kittatinny Mountains and access to the best homemade ice cream in the Northeast. Best times: mid-September for Broad-wings, Osprey and Bald Eagles; or mid- October – November for Red-tails and Red-shoulders and, with luck, a Golden Eagle. The watch is located above the Creamery at the top of 17A between Greenwood Lake and Warwick, NY.

New counters/leaders are always welcome. If you are available to be responsible for the count on one of these dates and you are all interested, consider becoming part of our hawk watch family and contact Ken Witkowski.

State Line Hawk Watch- September 3 - November 15, 2023, 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM

Meet at the State Line lookout in Alpine, NJ. 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 for updates on Fyke field trips here: <https://www.fykenature.org/trips.php>

Hour on the Tower- Every Sunday 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM at the Celery Farm



Usually on the Pirie-Mayhood Tower platform.

Everyone is invited to join with the group of regulars who keep a list of every species of bird they can identify over the course of one hour. It's a good way to improve your birding skills and catch up on Celery Farm news. The location may shift between the Pirie-Mayhood Tower platform on the east side of Lake Appert and the Warden's Watch platform near the Franklin Turnpike parking area.

Contact Gaby Schmitt to find out where to meet up.

**Self-Directed Exploration Open to Fyke Members
North Harpersfield Property**

George Rand and Pamela Ryder invite Fyke members to visit 135 acres of forest, field, stream, and pond in upstate NY. Please see the website to download and print [essential information](#) you must read before your visit, including directions, contact numbers, release and waiver document, lodging, and area attractions, as well as a [map of the property](#).



**Wood Duck Box Update
By Jim Wright**

I am pleased to report that the experimental wood duck boxes that were installed on trees in the Celery Farm Nature Preserve this spring have been a great success thus far.

Carl Krag, Gaby Schmitt and I checked all eight boxes during the last week in July and found that wood ducks had nested in four of them. (Carl also counted 32 wood ducks on the Celery Farm's Lake Appert in the past week.)

This is the first year we have not had to rely on the wood duck nestboxes on Lake Appert. The traditional wooden boxes could only be accessed in the winter when the lake was frozen, and most had fallen into disrepair for various reasons.

The new boxes are revolutionary because of their design and construction materials. I asked Scott Weston – who designed the squirrel-resistant nestboxes that are featured in *The Screech Owl Companion* that he and I recently co-authored – to enlarge the design slightly for wood ducks.

Scott also suggested that we use a new building material, Acre Board, made of upcycled rice hulls. The design calls for a steeply pitched roof so squirrels slide off when they jump atop it, and all surfaces are hard and smooth, making access exceedingly difficult for squirrels, raccoons, and other predators. It's expensive but long-lasting.

Aside from signs of predation by starlings in one box – several unhatched eggs had been punctured – we saw no evidence of predators.

A big thank you to everyone who helped with this ground-breaking project, from selecting the locations for the nestboxes to helping put them up.

Final List- Stepping Up for the Celery Farm Gabriele Schmitt

TOTAL 63 species:

Canada Goose	Black-capped Chickadee
Wood Duck	Tufted Titmouse
Mallard	Tree Swallow
Mourning Dove	Northern Rough-winged Swallow
Rock Pigeon	Barn Swallow
Chimney Swift	White-breasted Nuthatch
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	Blue-gray Gnatcatcher
Spotted Sandpiper	House Wren
Greater Yellowlegs	Carolina Wren
Common Loon	European Starling
Green Heron	Gray Catbird
Great Egret	American Robin
Great Blue Heron	House Sparrow
Black Vulture	House Finch
Turkey Vulture	American Goldfinch
Cooper's Hawk	Tree Sparrow
Bald Eagle	Chipping Sparrow
Red-shouldered Hawk	White-throated Sparrow
Red-bellied Woodpecker	Song Sparrow
Downy Woodpecker	Swamp Sparrow
Hairy Woodpecker	Baltimore Oriole
Pileated Woodpecker	Red-winged Blackbird
Northern Flicker	Brown-headed Cowbird
Least Flycatcher	Common Grackle
Eastern Phoebe	Northern Waterthrush
Great Crested Flycatcher	Blue-winged Warbler
Eastern Kingbird	Black-and-white Warbler
Warbling Vireo	Common Yellowthroat
Blue Jay	Yellow Warbler
American Crow	Yellow-rumped Warbler
Fish Crow	Northern Cardinal
Common Raven	



Corvids
By Charley West

The *Corvids* are a funny bunch --
Eating carrions for lunch --
It's gotta stink would be my hunch.

And feast they do- it's quite a trick --
To keep it down and not get sick --
I guess it makes their feathers slick.

It can't be good for vocal cords --
Never have they won awards --
With voices sharp as two-edged swords.

Black-on-Black's the standard plot --
Photogs take artistic shots --
Bust musical the birds are NOT!

Common raven with royal cloak --
Tries to sound like normal folk --
Yet only gives a grunt-line croak.

There was one bird that made a score --
Had a star upon his door --
His famous line was 'Nevermore'.

Chihuahuan Raven's the cowboys' pet --
Flies in deserts seldom wet --
He'll never make it to the Met.

Northwester Crow is much the same --
Geography is in his name --
But as for singing -- pretty lame.

Fish Crow tried his best you know --
Wants to greet you with "Hello"--
Yet only utters a curt "Uh-Oh".

American Crow can give you pause --
To wonder why his song has flaws?
Be Caws!



Field and Feeder Notes

By Judith Cinquina

May 13, 1999 - Calling, low flying Sandhill Crane flushed from Butterfly Garden...

1st record for the CF and a lifer! Rob Fanning

May 24, 2008 - I found this crane while birding with Rob Fanning... We watched it for 40 minutes from one of the platforms, then it took flight and didn't return.

It's a good feeling when you can spot your lifers! Jim Kuehlke

May 9, 2024 - Crane grazing on the mudflat. Same size as a Great Egret, but with a brown back, white neck and head and a bright red crown. Rich Krakowski

Awesome surprise, spotted feeding on the mudflats... Doug Morel



Many Fyke members and friends enjoyed the rare Sandhill Crane that dropped into the Celery Farm (CF), May 9, including Stephanie Swanzey who managed to photograph it from the Boy Scout Platform. Discovered by Rich Krakowski shortly after sunrise, it was the third record for the CF. Unfortunately, the crane was gone by afternoon. A native of North America's grasslands and freshwater marshes, cranes were extremely rare in NJ until the late 1960's. Boyle in his *Birds of New Jersey* (2011) mentions a flock descended from an escaped Common Crane and a wild Sandhill Crane in the late 1990's in Salem and Cumberland counties. That flock now includes both hybrids and wild cranes. Wild Sandhill

Cranes can live for over 35 years but don't breed until two to eight years old. Just west of us, a pair successfully fledged one chick on the NJ side of the Wallkill NWR in 2021, but don't count on seeing more wild cranes anytime soon. A pair attempted to nest there again in '22 and twice in '23, but their nests and eggs were destroyed by rising water levels each time. This year the marsh was drained for maintenance, and no nesting attempt was detected. Although they usually lay two eggs, normally only one chick or colt survives. Called a colt, the chick has well-developed legs, enabling it to run within a day of hatching. That one colt in four years is no way to increase the population. Fyke members commented that the May 9th crane grazed on Lake Appert's mudflats. Although the CF is too small to accommodate a nesting pair, it can provide insects, crayfish, earthworms, eggs and nesting birds, snakes, and mice for this omnivorous visitor.

On June 10, Jim Wright sent out an alert that a Red-necked Phalarope was spotted straight out from the Warden's Watch. "You'll need a scope," he advised. A small pelagic bird, usually seen in flocks offshore, this rare inland visitor was a female with a red neck, white throat and black, needle-like bill. Spotted in the early afternoon, it proved viewer friendly for many Fyke members, even late comers. Lisa Potash didn't arrive at the Warden's Watch until 6:50 p.m., and observed it was "feeding in a circular motion while delicately picking at the water's surface." Very active, phalaropes run or swim this way and that and sometimes swim rapidly in circles, creating a vortex that causes food to rise to the surface for easy picking. Not a first for the CF, Rob Fanning reported one on September 18, 2001 that stayed for three days. Female phalaropes are the pretty ones of a pair, and like the handsome male songbirds, leave their plainer partners to sit on the nest and raise the kids. This female will probably leave more than one male sitting on nests when she leaves her tundra breeding grounds.

A pair of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks caused excitement at the Meadowlands in late May. Discovered in the Clay Ave. wetlands, John Coyle noted their black bellies, gray faces, and white eyerings, and Lisa Potash added long, pink legs and reddish bills to the description. A bit smaller than a Mallard, this species used to be limited to southern Texas and Arizona, but Boyle in his *Birds of NJ* (2011) states that their population has "exploded" with "numerous extalimital sightings all over the eastern U.S." It's a duck to look for at the CF in the near future. A pair of Black-necked Stilts turned up nearby in the IBA Harrier Meadows at DeKorte around the same time and was enjoyed by a few Fyke members, thanks to Chris Takacs who allowed access to the gated

preserve. This species breeds in Maryland and Delaware and used to breed in southern NJ in the early 1800's, according to Boyle. Since then, NJ only gets an occasional visitor. The stilts are black and white with long, black stiletto bills and neon-pink, twiggy legs that go on forever and seem too fragile to support its frenetic lifestyle. A. C. Bent in his Life Histories, Dover edition 1962, comments on their "absurdly long and slender legs" and noted that when the stilt is feeding on land, it has to bend its legs backwards to enable its bill to reach the ground to capture brine flies and seeds.

Boyle labels the Little Blue Heron "uncommon," but they seem to be increasing, unless birders have merely gotten better at identifying them. A young Little Blue is white and resembles a Snowy Egret so much, it's easily overlooked, so kudos to Doug Morel who found four juvenile Little Blues in a muddy puddle along Halifax Road, Mahwah, July 28. All four were spotted the next day in nearby Lake Henry sitting together on a log. Two more young Little Blues turned up, one at the CF spotted by Fred Weber on Lake Appert's mudflats, the 22nd and a second reported by John Coyle at DeKorte, July 24. John noticed his heron had a few patchy blue areas in its white plumage. It will become dark blue/gray all over when it's a full adult. A bit larger than the Little Blue, a Tricolored Heron turned up at DeKorte July 12 and Doug Morel found it the next day. Seen by many Fyke birders, including Alan Pomeranz on the 28th, this heron is also uncommon and, from afar, resembles an adult Little Blue and a Great Blue Heron, but its bright white belly and wing linings give it away. A number of birders have reported a Black-crowned Night Heron adult at the CF in June and July, but Gaby Schmitt topped that with up to nine Black-crowns at Oradell's Van Buskirk Island County Park in April. They were in the trees across the river from the paddling center. A rare immature White Ibis turned up at DeKorte, August 7. Not reported there since 2008, it was enjoyed by many birders including Brian Kenney who observed it hunting the phragmites near Disposal Road. Evidently their breeding population is increasing in south Jersey.

Blue Grosbeaks aren't common but began consistently breeding in central NJ in the late 1970's, according to Lowther and Ingold, Birds of the World (online, 2020). They have been turning up at DeKorte in the Meadowlands regularly in the last decade. John Coyle found a male along the Kingsland Overlook trail that overlooks the DeKorte parking lot and Environmental Center, April 21. John described it as a "chunky blue songbird with a thick bill and chestnut colored wingbars." The male is often confused with its smaller and very common cousin the Indigo Bunting. Other birders noted a pair of them along Valley Brook Road, June 26. The chance of the pair breeding there is slim-to-none due to all the construction in progress on either side of the road into DeKorte. The only interesting information I found about this species was that it may "sidle" along branches much like a parrot (Stud 1964, Birds of the World.) Researchers know that they feed on insects, especially grasshoppers, crickets and some seeds, but this bird has barely been studied. Nothing is known about its nesting ecology, courtship behavior, song structure and learning. It's a great opportunity for birders to help fill in the blanks.



An extremely early spring Rose-breasted Grosbeak turned up at Janet Tedesco's feeders in Oakland, April 14. Doug found two Vesper Sparrows in Westwood, April 18. Another Vesper was along the Kingsland Overlook Trail at DeKorte, April 21, according to John Coyle. Both remarked on the Vesper's white eyerings and white outer tail feathers. Lisa and Bob Safier who live next to the CF enjoyed their first spring Ruby-throated Hummingbird, a male on April 25. On the other side of migration, a very early fall N. Waterthrush was spotted at the CF by Doug Morel, July 17 and a Worm-eating Warbler made the Hour on the Tower list July 27. Boyle states the N. Waterthrush is one of the earliest fall migrants beginning mid-July, and the Worm-eating isn't far behind. So, Doug's report and Julie McCall's Tower report are a sign that fall is already sneaking in.

A Screech Owl chose a cavity in a barkless tree for its roost at Garret in Paterson in April and was seen by many birders, including Gaby Schmitt. She got only a peek at the top of its head, as it dropped inside the tree

cavity. A Great Horned Owl appeared mid-morning at the CF, April 18. Brian Kenney wrote, “It was chased off the property by a Red-shouldered Hawk.” Maybe that Shoulder was one of the pair that raised three youngsters this year in Allendale. Jim Wright announced their success and wrote, “The proud raptor parents (or their cohorts) have nested in Allendale for more than two decades.” He continued, “Red-shouldered Hawks, the more handsome cousins of Red-tailed Hawks, are considered endangered in NJ when nesting. We are lucky to have them in our town.”



Other raptors also seem to be adapting to us. All spring and summer, Suzanne and Michio Ishii have had the best views of local Peregrine Falcons from their Cliffside Park apartment that overlooks the Hudson River and George Washington Bridge. “We think there are only three of the four original siblings left at this point,” Suzanne wrote, “The three are very noisy from early morning, calling to each other.” One youngster perched on their balcony, July 30, and Suzanne managed to photograph another at close range on a neighbor’s balcony. Ken Witkowski, our new Mount Peter coordinator, was surprised when a Cooper’s Hawk ignored him at Lake Tamarach in Hardyston and took a bath in the lake. Three different times in May, June and July the hawk performed its ablations while he was nearby.

Spring disappears too fast, but Mark Kantrowitz took it slow, enjoying each new addition to the spring chorus from his Hillsdale patio each morning. He described the “layering of migrant bird song” in mid-April, beginning with White-throats and Ruby-crowned Kinglets. Next, Catbirds, Parulas and Flickers added their voices to the chorus, while the end of April brought Black-throated Blue and Green Warblers and vireos. “Can’t wait for what comes next,” he wrote. They’re all going back the other way now. Be on the lookout for Nighthawks at sunset and the first kettle of Broad-winged Hawks, and if you have dripping water nearby, you may attract a colorful array of warblers. Please share with all of us what you find in your yard or in the field 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

By Tom Mitchell

The [Celery Farm Annual Bird Checklist](#) has really taken off. The fall migration will no doubt record additional sightings, but already by the end of July there were 144 species that had been seen this year with a good number of people participating and several with quite high counts. For me this is gratifying to see after building it and hoping that they would come.

The June 2024 Summer Survey got 60 responses, nearly half from website visitors who did not identify themselves as members of Fyke. Both members and non-members had wish lists for what might be done to improve the Celery Farm, supposing we have the human and financial resources to do them all and none of them are contradictory. The overall response was very positive, especially for the current habitat restoration projects. A [Survey Report](#) was created that allows Fyke members to filter the responses by any of the individual answers.

Several new website pages have been added: [Celery Farm Viewing Platforms and Bridges](#), the [Program from the 1992 Fyke 40th Anniversary Dinner](#), the [2006 Allendale Town Journal Celebration of 25 Years of the Celery Farm](#), [The Marsh Warden](#) poem for Stiles Thomas by Patricia Price, [Slime Molds at the Celery Farm](#), a [Celery Farm Species ID Quiz](#), a [Winged Insect Checklist](#), and the [Celery Farm Wordsle Game](#).

Also, the Celery Farm page sidebar was reorganized to include a link to [Celery Farm Habitat Management](#). There you will find a wide range of content that is presented in 14 separate website pages, many of which have been recently added. The [Volunteer Opportunities](#) page in particular has been viewed frequently and is the way that a good number of new volunteers have found us.

A copy of the current Fyke membership is now kept in a secure area of the website which makes it possible to check your membership status online. That option has been added to the [Membership & Donations](#) page and in addition a members only [Suggestion Box](#) has been added to the About page to allow members to express their recommendations for the Celery Farm, speakers for monthly meeting programs, possible outdoor events, or anything that comes to mind. The programming that was developed to do this also makes it possible to create whatever instrument may be desired in the future to put any sort of question before the membership.

Mike Limatola prepares a quarterly report on Celery Farm volunteer activities to submit to the Allendale Borough. That was easy enough in the past when there were only a few active volunteers and a limited number of activities. The level of activity around the habitat restoration projects this year is unprecedented in the recent past and perhaps in the history of Fyke. Work was done on 47 dates by 26 volunteers on 8 projects in the calendar quarter between April 1 and June 30. Presenting the information in the format used in previous reports requires listing each date and each project and each volunteer participating in that project that day, which means volunteer names needed to be listed 364 times in the most recent quarterly report. Because the volunteer timesheets are stored in the secure area of the website, gathering the data is simple enough, and now that the coding has been done to generate the information in the desired format, Mike can now get the complete report in seconds instead of facing a daunting task involving hours of collating information.

Here is a summary report by project for April through July:
(ESNPG is short for East Side Native Plant Garden.)

Scope: All Volunteers
Summary Only Sorted By: Project
Start: 04/01/2024 End: 07/31/2024

Projects	Dates	Hours	Volunteers
Brook Debris Cleanout	2	3:00	3
ESNPG Ongoing Plant Care	28	214:45	21
ESNPG Planting	9	262:30	19
ESNPG Site Preparation	25	309:15	20
ESNPG Watering	27	120:05	10
Green Way Meadow	4	67:45	17
Meadow Lane Brush Clearing	2	53:00	10
Meadow Lane Replanting	3	36:00	10
Pollinator Meadow	1	4:00	2
Totals:	9	1070:20	35



Welcome New Members

Brandon Alcaide, Fair Lawn
Francine Allen, Ramsey
Dana Anello & Family, Waldwick
Ryan Cassidy, Waldwick
Donna Dec, Allendale
Patrick Donahue & Family, Allendale
Dean Gilliland, Ridgewood

Carolyn Gnerre & Family, Ridgewood
Karl Krag, Midland Park
Faith Krausman, Montclair
Ann Mattamana, Suffern
Ellen Rosenwald, Glen Rock
Jonathan Schlosser & Family, Suffern
Noel Schulz, Waldwick

Fyke Board of Trustees:

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First Vice President: Gabriele Schmitt
Second Vice President: Sue Dougherty
Treasurer: Kurt Muenz
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Celery Farm: Mike Limatola
Gabriele Schmitt
Jim Wright
Conservation: Gabriele Schmitt
Programs: Monica Cardoza
Newsletter: Crista Trippodi Murphy
Publicity: Mike Lefebvre
Website Content: Tom Mitchell
Kevin Watson
Hawk Watch: Ken Witkowski

The Fyke Nature Association, a 501 (c) (3) organization, meets eight times a year. These are the meeting dates for 2024. All meetings are on Fridays.

January 26, 2024	July – no meeting
February 23, 2024	August – no meeting
March 22, 2024	September 27, 2024
April 26, 2024	October 25, 2024
May 17, 2024	November – no meeting
June – no meeting	December 6, 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 are gratefully appreciated!



The deadline for the Winter 2024 issue is October 18, 2024. Send material via e-mail to crista430@gmail.com or Box 141, Ramsey, NJ 07446