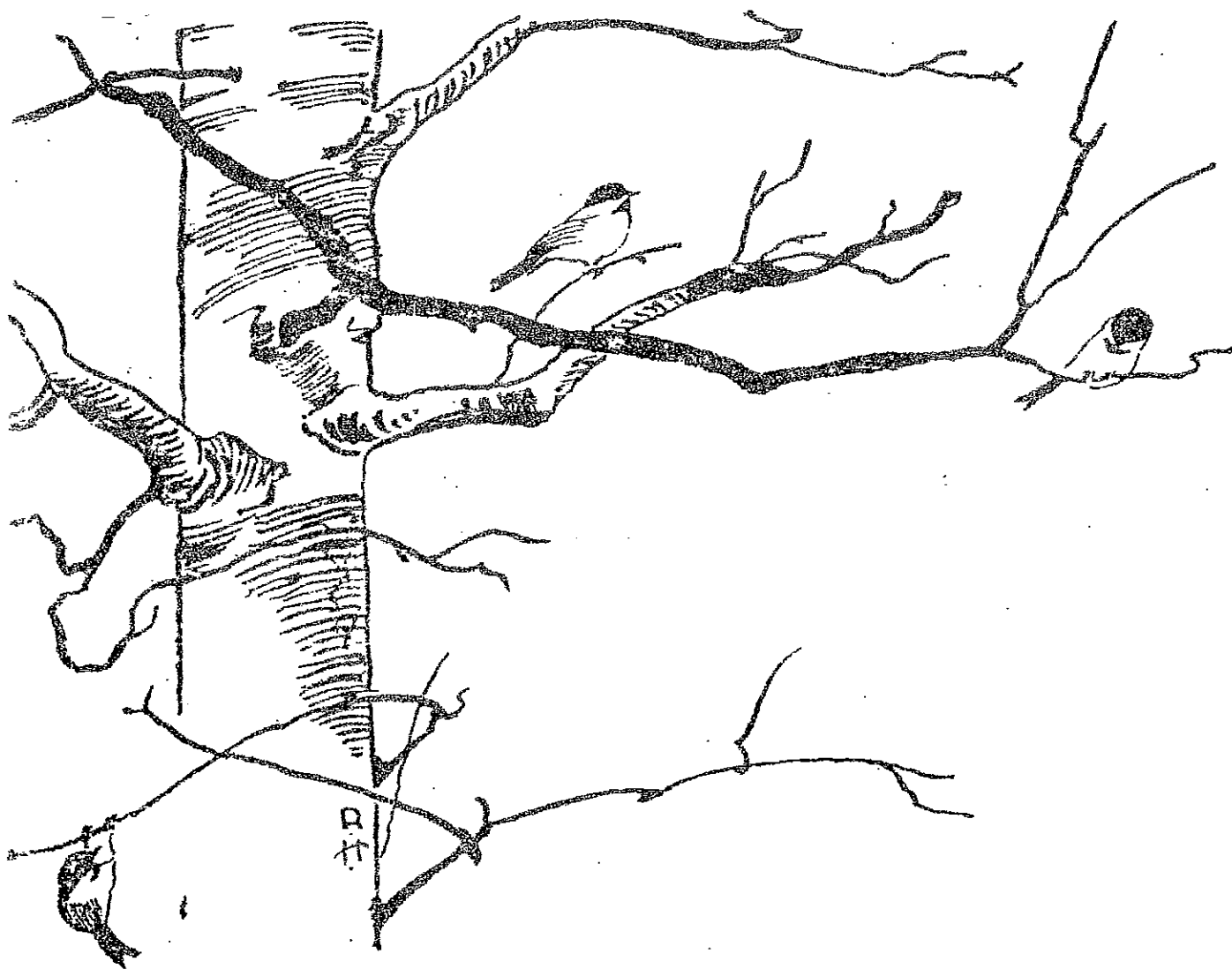
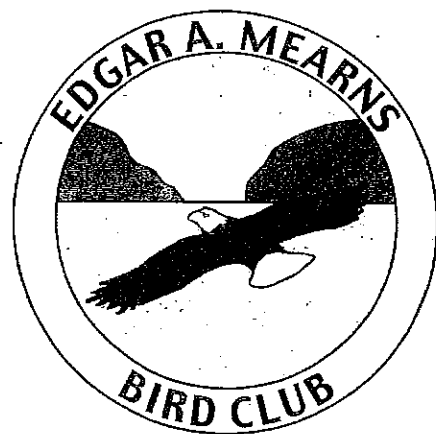


# THE ORANGE FEATHER



*Orange County, New York*

2017 – Spring/Summer

**THE ORANGE FEATHER**

A publication of

EDGAR A. MEARNS BIRD CLUB

Orange County, New York

**2017 OFFICERS**

President – Curt McDermott, 518 381-0707

Vice-President – Karen Miller, 346-0595

Secretary – Kathleen Ashman, 294-6140

Treasurer – Linda Strohl, 496-3021

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

It's Hard to believe that it has been six months since we have met between these pages, but here we are again. Our members have been very active since our last newsletter, discovering many rarities in our area. Many of these species have become "regular" in migration, to our area, only within the past dozen years or so.

The fall produced sightings of yet another Connecticut Warbler or two or was it three at the Winding Waters Trail. Our newer members may think of this as a common occurrence, as it has become "regular" over the past few years. In fact, prior to Rob Stone finding this little gem of a spot and finding Connecticut warbler in it, our county records of this species over the club's existence probably numbered around 5 or less. This is truly a fantastic find at any time. Shortly after the warblers had gone, yet another species, relatively new to the "regular" list showed up and was found by Kathy Ashman. Kathy found a Sandhill Crane at 6 ½ Station Rd., which remained for a few days, providing many with a look. Then came Bruce Nott's October adult Lesser Black-backed Gull at Cornwall Bay. Bruce finds these guys with such regularity, that he sometimes texts me and mentions it almost as a passing thought. Our first county record for this species was only about 15 years ago, so still a great find! Oddly, every one of our records for this species has been an adult. I expect that it is due to the difficulty in identifying immature birds. Finally, at the end of October, our Short-eared Owls returned, where numbers on Indiana Rd., reached about 10. That equals about .33 owls per photographer on any given weekend day. I would encourage our members to lead by example when we are out there and to discourage poor behavior when needed. No telling how long we will all be welcome in that location.

In came winter and Scotty's home feeders attracted potentially EVERY Purple Finch in the northeast. The exact number escapes me, but it's probably 6 or 7 times whatever you are thinking...or more. Additionally, he had several Evening Grosbeaks, a rare and nice treat. Mid-December found Matt Zeitler viewing Cornwall Bay from Kowawese Park in New Windsor. Matt was able to capture a few images of a TINY gull, just before dusk, which had this author taking time off from work in an effort to relocate it the following morning. I met with my father, Ken, after being there 30 minutes before daybreak, and we attacked the area from all sides. No

luck! That one hurt. The photos suggest by size, in relationship to surrounding species, the great potential for a Little Gull. The bird was never relocated. Sometime around then, Bruce had another Red throated Loon on Orange Lake in the Town of Newburgh. At this point, I'm pretty sure he owns one and releases it every so often.

As winter weather in the northeast will have it, this year's Christmas Count had its challenges. Strong winds and falling snow limited many to what they could find at feeders. Still many endured and reaped the rewards with a fine dinner and get together at the Stein residence. We thank the Stein's again for their wonderful hospitality.

Bruce was on the prowl again and found a Red-necked Grebe on Chadwick Lake in Newburgh. I suspect that it was his Red throated Loon in disguise, released yet again. While birding at the Warren Sod Farm, Linda Scrima found and photographed a VERY rare inland record of "Ipswich" Savannah Sparrow. This species once stood on its own and was later lumped with Savannah. It may again be split in the future. If it does Linda, you will certainly have a species on your county list that the rest of us will probably never get. Ipswich Sparrow is strictly a coastal bird and it is extremely rare to have found one inland. Moving northward, a Northern Shrike was seen by several Mearns members at the Shawangunk Grasslands. In the south, Alan and Della Wells found a Trumpeter Swan at Nyack Beach, which stayed around for many to see. This species seems to be on the rise in NY with more accepted sighting being discovered in recent years. Then there was Bruce again, always prowling and this time finding a Greater White fronted Goose. This species is another of the newer "regular" species. It still amazes me at how quickly bird species such as this one, have become expected annual visitors. Many of us remember a very short time ago when this was NOT the norm. Then, guess who found a Pink footed Goose...yup, Bruce. This sighting moves this species to our regular checklist...WHAT?? Somehow that is true, but we will not yet refer to this species as regular, or Bruce's knack for finding the good stuff. Rob Miller, a member of the Burroughs Club found a Ross's Goose in Harriman, behind the Monroe Woodbury Middle School, which was seen by many. This little guy was among Canada's and may have been the same bird reported in Stillwater, NY the week preceding. Stillwater's bird was last reported the day before this one showed up in Orange. Lastly, what has become an annual event and a spectacle not to be missed... Thousand of Snow Geese showed up in the Pine Island and Middletown areas. Numbers up to 5,000 (and 2 Ross's Geese found by Rob Stone and John Haas) could be seen at any one time, lifting up for no apparent reason, only to fly around and then set back down where they lifted from, or relocating a short distance away. I suspect that there is a prankster in every group that occasionally yells "Eagle" just for effect. Like kids pulling an alarm... there's always one. This is truly one of my favorite birding experiences and I look forward to seeing it each year.

This brings us to the present. What awaits us is anyone's guess. I hope each of you have your own special find this winter. It doesn't have to be rare or seen by many. Perhaps it will be just be a private moment that you share with one of our feathered friends. They are often the best.

I wish to thank Jan Fitzpatrick for again completing the Orange Feather, for our enjoyment. This would not be possible without you.

Good Birding,

Curt

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#### JUST A NOTE

I'd like to thank all the field trip leaders and committee chairmen who got their reports and information to me in such a timely manner for this Feather. It certainly helps me out and I don't have to beg for "stuff".

That said, I believe the membership is well over 100 members and as you can see when reading this edition of the Feather there are no other contributions except for Dave's joke and my article. Where is everyone? Doesn't anyone have anything "birdy" to say? If there are no contributions to the Feather there is not much substance here and I find that very sad.

Please help me out for the August Feather. I don't see much of a future for this publication without member support. I enjoy doing this job, but only with your help. Your submissions can be emailed or mailed to me at any time; you don't have to wait until summer!

Thanks in advance. Jan Fitzpatrick

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## Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Programs - 2017

When: Meetings are held every 2nd Monday of the month at 7:30 pm (except as noted)

Where:

During **September–December** meetings are held at Kenridge Farm, Cornwall, NY (in the farm house across from the barn), Kenridge Farm is part of the Hudson Highlands Nature Museum, 120 Muser Dr., Cornwall, NY 12518.

During **January–May** meetings are held at Washingtonville Middle School (in the library, on the 2nd floor), 38 West Main St., Washingtonville, NY 10992.

During **June**, Annual Picnic location to be announced

When	Where	Who	Title/Topic
<b>2017</b>			
01/09/17	Washingtonville	Zach Smith	American Kestrels
02/13/17	Washingtonville	NO PROGRAM	School Closure
03/13/17	Washingtonville	Elijah Goodwin	Wood Thrush Populations at Rockefeller Preserve
<b>04/03/17*</b>	Washingtonville	Lee Hunter	Antarctica Expedition
05/08/17	Washingtonville	Bill Fiero	Birding Sri Lanka
06/03/17 (Sat)	TBA	Members	Annual Picnic
<b>SUMMER BREAK</b>			
09/11/17	Kenridge	Alan Wells	Birding Cuba
10/09/17	Kenridge	Roundtable	Birding Tour Groups
11/13/17	Kenridge	TBA	TBA
12/11/17	Kenridge	Members Night	Mearns Share-a-Thon

\* NOTE DATE CHANGE.

Alan Wells, Program Chairman

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### MEMBERSHIP

A special welcome to the following new Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club members: Scott Lenhart, Millbrook; Houston Stebbius and Dena Steele, Tuxedo Park; James and Emily VanGelder, Warwick; Julius and Leslie Rubinfeld, Rock Hill; Kimberly Thompson, Walden; Linda Rohleder and Richard Pillar, Salisbury Mills; and Michael Bruce, West Point. We are sure you will enjoy our upcoming field trips, meetings, annual picnic, and opportunities to learn more about birding in Orange County and the surrounding areas.

We ended 2016 with 147 members. We look forward to birding with you in the New Year and the chance to make new friends.

Linda Stroh, Treasurer

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EDGAR A. MEARN'S BIRD CLUB  
Financial Report 2016

INCOME:

Beginning Balance-January 2016	\$ 879.67
Dues (2016 and partial 2017), Donations, Interest (\$.30)	1,316.30
 Total Income:	 \$2,195.97

EXPENSES:

Orange Feathers: Feb-\$180.54 Aug-\$227.57	408.11
 Donations: NYSOA	 50.00
Young Birders	25.00
American Heart Association in memory of Maureen Tabor	50.00
 Speaker: Edwin McGowan	 25.00
 Club Picnic	 54.05
 State Farm Insurance	 452.81
 Plaque post	 40.00
 Checklists	 108.00
 Web hosting for 36 months	 215.64
 Total Expenses:	 \$1,428.61
 Ending Balance-December 2016 (combined Checking and Savings)	 \$ 767.36

Linda Strohl, Treasurer

## FALL/WINTER FIELD TRIPS PAST

Black dirt – September 3 – Jeff Goulding, Leader – Twenty two Mearnsers met at the former Jolly Onion Inn in Pine Island. A number of people joined others in carpooling which helped keep the train down to fewer cars creating dust trails. Our first stop was the Warren Sod Farm via Skinners Lane and coming in from the back side. The area before crossing the little bridge was relatively quiet with a Sharp-shinned Hawk and our first American Kestrel spotted. Making our way down the strips of cut sod Killdeer were scattered about. The intrepid Dennis Murphy scouted out the area the day before and said there were two Buff-breasted Sandpipers on the back side of the farm. Once we crossed the bridge we were met with other visitors to the area that we theorized were model airplane/rocket launching folks. Letting them pass we continued on to the area. The day before the sandpipers were within a stone's throw of the road but sadly when we spotted them they were in the back reaches of the field. A Northern Harrier flew over stirring up the birds and pushing them towards us a bit. Donna Loomis and her daughter were pleased as they were life birds for the pair. Also viewed from this area were dozens of American Kestrels as they were making their way south, many fluttering like small Rough-legged Hawks as they looked for food. Continuing on, we journeyed over to the Camel Farm where the ever present Snow Goose was still there. Because of parking issues and lack of birds we motored to Missionlands Road on our way to the Wallkill River Refuge platform. Missionlands Road was also very quiet with the exception of Killdeer. Arriving at the platform we enjoyed a Great Egret and a Greater Yellowlegs and Bobolinks in flight. The photographers in the group took advantage of the egret as he modeled with slow purposeful steps in front of us while he stalked prey. In lieu of a long walk around to the back pond we all drove to the parking area off Owens Station Road and walked in from there. This is an area to be remembered for future trips. The parking area is near a lake and the path to the back pond is easy and shorter than walking around from the platform. By far it was the birdiest of any of the areas we had visited. Talking with a departing birder he said a Western Sandpiper was there and we hoped to see the Stilt Sandpiper that was spotted by Matt Zeigler earlier in the week. Arriving, there were many Least Sandpipers poking about and a few Pectoral Sandpipers were a nice surprise. A Semipalmated Sandpiper was also spotted. A lesson in camouflage was demonstrated when a Wilson's Snipe was spotted sitting under a bunch of loosestrife. In all it was a great day in the field with perfect weather. Starting temperature was 58 and ending at 71. 58 species were tallied.

Doodletown – September 10 – Amy Greher, Leader – This report was submitted by Bob Slechta. There we were, trudging up the hill in our sweat drenched and torn tattered clothing, slashing our machetes wildly to cut the thick steamy air in quixotic quest for the elusive Parulidae 'feathered God of the Woods'. As you can gather, dramatics aside, the very warm, humid air of late did not make for a very comfortable outing, or for that matter very productive. We managed a paltry 36 species and not one warbler, the likes of which should have been hanging in profusion off the berry laden Devil's Walking Sticks. At least American Robins were in good numbers enjoying the berries and providing a semblance of life today along with the local denizens of chickadees, titmice, downys, catbirds and Red-eyed Vireos. As a result of ending our sweaty walk in Doodletown early we had time to check out Iona Island where we had our best bird sighting of the day. A Green Heron landed right in front of us in an open area of marsh and gave us a good

show as it walked about snapping up in the air at dragonflies buzzing overhead, with a success rate of 30%. Other birds of note being seen or heard today were: Osprey, American Kestrel, Wood Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-throated and Warbling Vireos, Eastern Bluebird, American Goldfinch and Pileated Woodpecker.

Storm King Art Center – September 17 – Bob Slechta, Leader – The weather for today's trip could not have been nicer as we continue to be in the thralls of a protracted warm, dry weather pattern. Hence the lack of any appreciable bird movement and the attendant low numbers on recent outings. Today's paltry tally of 31 species lacked the presence of any blackbirds, swallows or vireos and only one American Robin and one Chipping Sparrow were seen. European Starlings, Blue Jays and American Goldfinches, however, were in good numbers and easy to see while Eastern Phoebe, Eastern Bluebird, Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmouse, Downy Woodpecker and Palm Warbler were less numerous but still easy to find and see. There were no migrating hawks today with only a pair of American Kestrels and one Merlin hunting the grounds. Most other birds today were only heard or briefly seen by few, of which we had: Northern Parula, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing and Scarlet Tanager. I hope things improve for the October trip here. (They didn't! Editor)

Bashakill – September 24 – Scott Baldinger, Leader – 25 members met at the Deli Fields for this morning's field trip around the Bashakill. It was a beautiful fall morning with temperatures in the upper 50's at the start going into the upper 60's by late morning. We put together a diverse list of 64 species. Raptors included Osprey, Bald Eagle, Sharp-shinned Hawk (3), Cooper's Hawk (2), Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk (4) and Red-tailed Hawk (20). We had all 6 area woodpeckers including a great look at a Pileated Woodpecker in flight over the Deli Fields, and a nice number of Northern Flickers (8). Wood warblers did not disappoint with 8 species found with Black and White Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Palm, Yellow-rumped and Prairie Warblers seen. Other good gets this morning included Wild Turkey (3), Great Egret (6), Common Gallinule, Belted Kingfisher (2), Blue-headed Vireo, Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet (4), Eastern Bluebird (7), Swainson's Thrush (3), Scarlet Tanager, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Rusty Blackbird. The bird of the day was found just before the end of the field trip. As we made our way along Haven Road, Bruce Nott and I noticed a smallish all white heron on the northeast side of Haven Road Bridge and as soon as we got our bins on the bird we knew we had a juvenile LITTLE BLUE HERON! This is a big time find for Sullivan County. In the 70 years of record keeping for the county, this is only the 3<sup>rd</sup> record for this species. The two previous records are from August 29, 2000 along the Delaware River (location unknown) and August 10, 1948 in DeBruce, NY. Fortunately most of our group had stayed to the end to see this great bird of the century and several other local birders were also able to get over to the Bashakill to see this excellent find.

Stewart State Forest – September 28 – Bruce Nott, Leader – Bob Slechta submitted this report. On today's trip to the forest we had a couple of nice pockets of bird activity where we picked up Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos, Scarlet Tanager, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Northern Parula,



Black-throated Blue and Green Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, numerous Yellow-rumped Warblers and House Wren. American Robins and Blue Jays were just about everywhere as were Black-capped Chickadees, but sparrows were few and far between with only a handful of White-throated and one Chipping Sparrow seen. Eastern Towhees and Eastern Phoebes on the other hand were scattered throughout with at least 12 of each tallied. 5 Belted Kingfishers were also spotted as well as Great Egret, Great Blue and Green Herons, one Double-crested Cormorant and some Wood Ducks and Mallards in the many swampy areas. Add in both accipiters, Cedar Waxwings, Gray Catbirds, the woodpeckers and various other common birds plus half a dozen Ring-necked Pheasants recently released for hunting and we ended our enjoyable walk in Stewart with 44 species.

Kenridge Farm – October 1 – Dave Baker, Leader – Joe Trapani took Dave's place as leader. It was a foggy, drizzly day. Ten members met at the Science Center at Kenridge Farm. Despite the weather we saw 53 species. It was not a bad warbler day with 7 species seen including many Palms and Black-throated Greens. The water level in the ponds was down so there were few water birds seen. We did have Mallards and a Great Blue Heron. The highlight of the day was a Great Horned Owl in a tree being mobbed by a gang of crows. The owl stayed put. The trip ended in the parking lot where we were able to get a great views of a Merlin in a nearby tree.

Oil City Road – October 5 – Kathy Ashman, Leader – Seven members of the Mearns Club gathered at the Wallkill River NWR Liberty Marsh at 8:30. It was a beautiful morning with a combination of both fog and sunshine. The poke weed near the platform was jumping with a large variety of sparrows: Song, Swamp, White-throated, White-crowned, Savannah, Field and Lincoln's. As Barry Babcock was looking through his binoculars at a sparrow a Virginia Rail flew through his field of vision, then out of sight into cover. The water level remains quite low which kept waterfowl to a minimum. Only Green-winged Teal and Mallards were seen. The birds suddenly flushed for what seemed no apparent reason, until someone spotted a black bear coming along the edge of the slough. Fortunately it ambled off as soon as it spotted us. As we were deciding how to proceed, we learned that Rob Stone had a Connecticut Warbler at Winding Waters. Because the fog was impairing visibility we decided to go there in the hope of better conditions and a chance to see this rare bird. Just as we were leaving, we were treated to the rare sight of a beautiful Fog Bow to the right of the platform. Winding Waters proved to be indeed less foggy, and many sparrows and other birds were seen along the trail. In addition to the sparrows we had at Liberty Marsh we also added Chipping Sparrow to our list. Several small flocks of Canada Geese flew overhead and we got to see three American Kestrels hunting over the field. Bob Slechta spotted a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on a tree across the river and we were all able to get on the bird. As we came to the fork in the trail we spotted an unusual bird sitting at the top of a small ailanthus tree. After all of us got good looks at the bird we determined, to our delight, that it was a female Dickcissel. It was the highlight of our trip and a life bird for some. As we walked the trail we saw several Common Yellowthroats and Yellow-rumped Warblers we spotted several Blue Jays harassing a Sharp-shinned Hawk sitting in the branches of a nearby dead tree. Unfortunately we were unable to relocate the Connecticut Warbler. On the return trip we watched American Crows chasing both a Northern Harrier and a Cooper's Hawk with the Sharpie joining into the mix as well. We were also able to observe Lincoln's, Savannah,

Field, Chipping and Song Sparrows feeding along the trail. Several Eastern Bluebirds and Eastern Phoebes were also present. Two Belted Kingfishers flew by tussling with one another. We returned to Liberty Loop, and since there was nothing new at the platform and it was nearing 11:30 we elected to walk a short distance down Liberty Lane. A huge flock of about 200 Tree Swallows were hunting over the area, among which Dennis Murphy spotted a lone Barn Swallow. Bruce Nott spotted two Palm Warblers feeding in some poke weed and two Red-tailed Hawks were spotted soaring in the distance. As we were departing we saw a large flock of 75 to 100 American Crows flying in tight formation over Liberty Lane. We ended the trip a little before noon and headed to the Harvest Inn in Pine Island for a delicious lunch and a recap of the trip. Weather at the start was 48 degrees, calm winds with fog and sunshine breaking through, and at the end it was 65 degrees with a cool north breeze. It was a wonderful outing for all with a total of 51 species of birds, the Dickcissel being the highlight of the trip.

61/2 Station Road – October 8 - Karen Miller, Leader – Our morning started with a heavy layer of fog over the trails and a temperature of 52 degrees. Ten Mearnsers headed out the trail along the Orange County Jail and picked up most of the regulars: Yellow-rumps, Swamp Sparrows, a Northern Mockingbird, Titmice, Northern Flickers, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Cedar Waxwings and others. By the time we crossed the road to the Audubon site the fog had lifted. Tom Crepet and Jane Vecchione were ahead of us on the trail and quickly informed us that a Sandhill Crane had flown over the marsh and then settled in the thick vegetation. We searched for the bird, but were unsuccessful. A Marsh Wren, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Blackpoll and Rusty Blackbirds were highlights on this part of the trail. We then headed to the Citgo Pond for the last part of our trip. We were pleased to find 50 Green-winged Teal, a Green Heron, Least Sandpipers and four Pectoral Sandpipers. On the walk back to the parking lot we were treated to an American Bald Eagle flying over and a large kettle of 20 Turkey Vultures. It was a good morning of birding that resulted in list of 50 species. This was the first time we had tried this outing in the fall and we expect to repeat it again in 2017.

Goosepond - October 12 – Bill Iannone, Leader – As usual it was a cool October morning that warmed up nicely for 4 dedicated members on a partly cloudy day. What distinguished this trip was the activity and movement as well as the exceptional “good looks” of the birds for the entire Trip. We met at the boardwalk trail of Goosepond Park on Route 17M. We had approximately 30 or our 42 species the first thing in the morning in bright fall sunshine. Many of the birds posed for us on the railing of the boardwalk or in the nearby scrubs. As we stood on the sunlit boardwalk we had exceptional looks at Blue-headed Vireo, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped and Palm Warblers, and Song, Swamp and White-throated Sparrows. The most impressive sight was the unusually large flock of very blue Eastern Bluebirds actively dancing in the sunshine for us. Posing on the bare trees were American Kestrel and Cooper’s and Red-tailed Hawks. There were some Red-winged Blackbirds still around. Then we moved on to the Laroe Road entrance to the park and were surprised by some nice Purple Finches and my first junco of the season. The Gray Catbirds and Eastern (Rufous-sided) Towhees were still around. The juicy berries on all the vines in the park provided a feast for the American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, Yellow-rumped Warblers and White-throated Sparrows. Unfortunately, I could not

find the Brown Creeper that was seen the previous day, but it was another rewarding trip at Goosepond.

Winding Waters Trail – October 16 – Curt McDermott, Leader – This report is from Bob Slechta. The trip started out overcast, cool and breezy, not very comfortable for some of us wimpy older folk. The breeze also made it difficult to spot sparrows as they never stayed out in the open very long. Even so, we did manage to spy Swamp, Song, Field, Savannah, White-crowned and one Lincoln's Sparrow. Recently migrated juncos were also seen today as were quite a few White-throated Sparrows who were very numerous in the 'tunnel', a stretch of trail with trees on both sides forming a tunnel of sorts. It was in this section where the most bird activity was with lots of American Robins and Yellow-rumped Warblers flitting back and forth. It's here we also had Purple Finch, Palm Warbler, Blackpoll, Cedar Waxwings, American Goldfinch, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Carolina Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, European Starling and Rusty blackbird. There were at least 5 Rustys foraging along a shallow portion of shoreline amongst quite a few robins that were splashing about as they bathed. A nice sight! With the expected mix of species plus Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, Belted Kingfisher, Pileated Woodpecker, American Kestrel and Northern Harrier we ended the walk with a nice tally of 46 species.

Storm King Art Center – October 22 – Bob Slechta, Leader – cancelled due to rain.

Oil City Road – October 29 – Kathleen Ashman, Leader – Eleven members gathered on the platform on a brisk Saturday morning the last weekend of October. The water levels at the refuge remain disappointingly low, so no waterfowl were visible in the pond in front of the platform. A few Mallards and Canada Geese were seen flying over the grassy areas, as well as several Northern Harriers (including a beautiful Gray Ghost that showed nicely). Additional birds flying by were American Pipits, Blue Jays and an extremely large number of American Crows. A few Song Sparrows were spotted in a shrub by the parking area. Due to the cold and increasing winds we decided to drive to Owen's Station Crossing and walk in from there to the south impound. We were not disappointed. As we walked in we saw large numbers of White-throated Sparrows, Downy Woodpeckers, some Yellow-rumped Warblers and several Ruby-crowned Kinglets. At the impound we were able to observe a large number of Mallards and American Black Ducks as well as a number of beautiful Northern Pintail. American Pipits were present on the mudflats in large numbers, and everyone got good close up views of these beautiful birds both through binoculars and scopes. In addition, Mary Buskey spotted 5 gorgeous Pectoral Sandpipers that everyone got a chance to see well. One of the Pecs had a noticeable limp but was able to feed and fly without difficulty. As we walked further at the southern end of the loop we spotted two Rusty Blackbirds sitting up in a small tree next to the trail. Sparrows were numerous among the grasses, but we saw only one Swamp Sparrow among the large numbers of White-throats and Songs. In addition large number of crows were roosting and feeding at the southern end of the marsh. We backtracked and headed out to an early lunch at the Harvest Inn as everyone was cold and hungry. After lunch seven of us drove to the Heritage Trail in Goshen to try for the Sandhill Crane. We were not disappointed and all were able to get good looks at the crane as it fed along the cattails on the far side of the marsh. Additional

species we picked up included a Bald Eagle flying overhead, Northern Shoveler, Ring-billed Gull, Tree Swallow and Mute Swan. Total species for the day was 44, with highlights being the American Pipits, Pectorals, Sandhill Crane and Bald Eagle. Temperature at the start was 34, winds were light SW with mostly cloudy skies. At the close of the morning the temperature had risen to 42 degrees, winds out of the SW at 10 mph with gusts to 15 mph and partly cloudy skies. Despite the cold, everyone had a great outing with wonderful birds and good company.

Black dirt – November 12 – Joe Cullen, Leader – Today nine birders met to find whatever birds might be present in the black dirt region of Orange County. The weather was clear, but cold, temperatures rising only into the forties, but it was still a good day to be out birding. We did not see many of the expected grassland species. Only Horned Larks were seen in good numbers. Surprisingly no Killdeer were seen. We did not find any Snow Bunting or longspurs, although both species were seen earlier in the week. We did get a good number of sparrow species including White-throated, White-crowned, American Tree, Savannah, Fox, and Dark-eyed Juncos. Good numbers of blackbirds were also moving through as were large flocks of Canada Geese. We eventually saw a total of 42 species before we went for a welcome hot lunch at the Harvest Inn.

Eastern Orange lakes – November 19 – Linda Strohl, Leader – It was a perfect autumn day for birding the area. Our most active site was the Walmart pond, of all places. We observed Northern Pintail, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Hooded Mergansers, Green-winged Teal, American Black Duck, American Coot, Mallards and the ever present Ring-billed Gulls. Also seen was a flock of Cedar Waxwings and a cooperative Belted Kingfisher. Some members also saw a Peregrine Falcon and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Next stop was Browns Pond where we added Canada Geese, Ruddy Ducks, Bufflehead, Mute Swans and many Ring-necked Ducks to our list. The swamp on Route 207 had a new species: Pied-billed Grebe. A quick stop at Orange Lake only revealed the usual decoys that tricked us several years ago. We headed to our last stop at Chadwick Lake where the hoped for goldeneye was not seen but a Carolina Wren was heard and more ruddies were present. We ended our morning with 12 waterfowl and a grand total of 46 species, plus 14 happy birders on this delightful fall day.

Shawangunk Grasslands – November 26 – Tom and Jane, Leaders – no report received

Cape Ann, MA – December 3 & 4 – Jodi Brodsky, Leader – We started out the weekend at our local lunch spot for the best chowder on the Cape. Then we headed over to Halibut point. It was very quiet there but always happy to see Harlequin Ducks and Northern Gannets. On Saturday morning we met at the Fisherman's Monument to scan for Common Eiders, Red-breasted Mergansers and loons. We headed north to find a Tufted Duck that had been hanging out with a raft of Ring-necked Ducks! A Pink-footed Goose was also seen, but by the time we arrived hunters were in the fields and the wild goose chase ended. The next few hours were spent at Parker River NWR. It was not as "birdy" as usual, but always a beautiful place to explore. Our last chase of the day was at Crane Beach. We had a fairly long walk but were rewarded with a very close Snowy Owl. The trip concluded on Sunday after we birded all around Gloucester and Rockport.

Eastern Orange Christmas Count - December 17 – Bob Slechta, Compiler – see separate report

Duck Count – January 14 – submitted by Bob Slechta – this year’s Winter Waterfowl Count went well thanks to the great efforts put in by Kathy Ashman, Joe Cullen, Karen Miller, Bruce Nott and myself as we scoured the county and its many fields, streams and lakes. As to be expected this time of year most of our lakes and ponds were frozen with the exceptions of Greenwood Lake, Beaver Dam Lake and Brown’s Pond. The Hudson and our other rivers and streams were open and there was no snow on the ground. However, we did have two very cold spells (that even froze our streams) and snow cover events prior to the count which I suspect drove out many birds. At the end of the day we ended up with 5581 individuals for our efforts, of which the bulk were Canada Geese (4450) and a nice mix of other ducks, etc., of which we had: 2 Snow Geese, 1 Ross’s Goose, 16 Mute Swans, 14 Gadwall, 2 American Wigeons, 26 American Black Ducks, 1 Bufflehead, 24 Hooded Mergansers, 535 Common Mergansers, 1 Red-breasted Merganser and 1 Ruddy Duck. Not a bad tally for this time of year.

Eagle Trip – January 28 – Gerhard Patsch, Leader – It was a dark gray morning as 14 members and friends met at the Route 6/202 Iona Island scenic overlook. Temperatures were in the mid-thirties with a moderate wind. There was no snow or ice anywhere, which put a damper on our expectations of seeing a hundred or more eagles. We spotted 12 Bald Eagles along with several Common Ravens and Common Mergansers from the overlook. We continued to Peekskill Bay where we enjoyed close eagle fly-bys and some wonderful aerial displays of eagles locking talons and tumbling somersaults! Iona Island and Peekskill Bay gave us our best eagle sightings along with 20 Great Cormorants. At Lake Meahagh in Verplank we had good looks at Hooded and Common Mergansers. After quick stops at George’s Island and Oscwana we drove to Croton Point Park where Joe Cullen found a female Red-breasted Merganser among more Common Mergansers, Buffleheads and several American Black Ducks. A Northern Harrier was hunting over the landfill and Bob Senerchia spied a Peregrine Falcon. Bruce Nott spotted a Cooper’s Hawk, our second for the trip and Bob Slechta heard a Brown Creeper and sighted a Belted Kingfisher. The glamour bird of the day was a Great Horned Owl found by our lucky leader. Thanks to Bruce, who always birds with his spotting scope, we all enjoyed good looks of the owl giving us the eye. After lunch we checked out a few more spots on the Croton River and Croton Reservoir from the dam, adding several more eagles and Buffleheads to our list. At the end of the trip we had sighted only 34 Bald Eagles, more than I expected, for reasons already mentioned, but not like past years. A couple of times we spotted eagles perched closely together pair bonding. No doubt a sign of more eagles to come. Duck numbers were also low. We had only eight species of waterfowl. Other notables included Carolina Wren, Hairy Woodpecker, Hermit Thrush, Red-winged Blackbird and Fish Crow. Our final tally for the day was 47 species.

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## 2016 CHRISTMAS COUNT

Oh...the weather outside was frightful and much to my chagrin the weathermen got their 5 day forecast right for a change. As you probably know we all awoke to the steady snowfall on Saturday which didn't end until 11:00 AM with 5 inches accumulation. This of course had a big impact on the count as many people did not venture out or if they did only for a few hours after the snow. Once the snow stopped it was quite pleasant, making it enjoyable to be out and about. The impact of the snow on the count is quite obvious when you look at the "effort data". On last year's count we had 13 parties in the field who covered 630 miles by car and 12 on foot via a total of 70 hours by car and 23 on foot producing 81 species and 26,841 individuals. This year we had 8 parties covering 298 miles by car, 0.5 by foot via 32 hours by car and 4.5 by foot which produced 62 species and 11,177 individuals. Feeder count data is also quite revealing as much of this year's count took place watching feeders with 36 hours put in versus only 10 hours last year. You can see the correlation to effort as this year's count produced approximately half the number of individuals with approximately half the effort as last year. If you look at the species tally including Count Period birds both years are pretty close with 82 versus 81 as the extended time to hunt for birds on either side of count day smooths out any weather glitches you may encounter on count day. The biggest surprise this year outside of the snow was the sighting of two female Evening Grosbeaks, birds last seen on our count in 1994 and regular visitors throughout the 80's. In all, things turned out as expected considering the weather and I'd like to commend everyone for doing a great job as usual and especially thank Herb and Ronnie Stein for hosting the Countdown. Kudos to Herb for still being in the thick of things! Hopefully the weather will be more favorable next year.

Bob Slechta, Compiler

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## A BIRDY JOKE

Nonbirder: "hey those pants look stylish. Are they pleated or non-pleated?"

Birder: "Actually neither. They are PILEATED!"

Nonbirder: "What?"

David Hultgren

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Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Eastern Orange Christmas Count - Leader Sheet  
12/17/2016



SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL
Snow Goose	1	Red-headed Woodpecker		Rusty Blackbird	1
Canada Goose	2748	Red-bellied Woodpecker	46	Common Grackle	5
Mute Swan	5	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	5	Brown-headed Cowbird	37
Wood Duck		Downy Woodpecker	76	House Finch	140
Gadwall		Hairy Woodpecker	3	Purple Finch	
American Wigeon	CP	Northern Flicker	10	Common Redpoll	
American Black Duck	17	Pileated Woodpecker	8	Pine Siskin	
Mallard	233	American Kestrel	CP	American Goldfinch	91
Northern Shoveler	CP	Merlin		House Sparrow	464
Northern Pintail	1	Peregrine Falcon	1		
Green-winged Teal	CP	Eastern Phoebe			
Canvasback		Northern Shrike			
Ring-Necked Duck	8	Blue Jay	244	<b>Rare/ Unusual Species</b>	
Lesser Scaup	CP	American Crow	1884	Brant	
Long-tailed Duck		Fish Crow	252	Cackling Goose	
Common Goldeneye	CP	Common Raven	CP	Blue-winged Teal	
Bufflehead	13	Horned Lark	25	Redhead	
Hooded Merganser	CP	Black-capped Chickadee	176	Black Scoter	
Common Merganser	47	Tufted Titmouse	180	White-winged Scoter	
Ruddy Duck	35	Red-breasted Nuthatch	5	Red-breasted Merganser	CP
Ring-necked Pheasant		White-breasted Nuthatch	78	Ruffed Grouse	
Wild Turkey	26	Brown Creeper	1	Red-throated Loon	
Pied-Billed Grebe	CP	Carolina Wren	10	Common Loon	
Double-crested Cormorant	CP	Winter Wren	2	Horned Grebe	
Great Cormorant		Golden-crowned Kinglet	CP	Red-necked Grebe	
Great Blue Heron	4	Ruby-crowned Kinglet		Great Egret	
Black Vulture	34	Eastern Bluebird	20	Northern Goshawk	
Turkey Vulture	14	Hermit Thrush	CP	Broad-winged Hawk	
Bald Eagle	5	American Robin	41	Virginia Rail	
Northern Harrier	2	Gray Catbird		Bonaparte's Gull	CP
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	2	Northern Mockingbird	4	Northern Saw-whet Owl	
Cooper's Hawk	7	European Starling	1587	Say's Phoebe	
Red-shouldered Hawk	CP	American Pipit		House Wren	
Red-tailed Hawk	40	Cedar Waxwing	CP	Wood Thrush	
Rough-legged Hawk		Snow Bunting		Varied Thrush	
American Coot	2	Yellow-rumped Warbler		Brown Thrasher	
Killdeer		Eastern Towhee		Lapland Longspur	
Wilson's Snipe		American Tree Sparrow	35	Common Yellowthroat	
Ring-Billed Gull	480	Field Sparrow	CP	Wilson's Warbler	
Herring Gull	13	Savannah Sparrow		Yellow-breasted Chat	
Iceland Gull		Fox Sparrow	1	Chipping Sparrow	
Great Black-backed Gull	11	Song Sparrow	29	Lark Sparrow	
Rock Pigeon	238	Swamp Sparrow	CP	Harris's Sparrow	
Mourning Dove	424	White-throated Sparrow	189	Brewer's Blackbird	
Eastern Screech Owl		White-crowned Sparrow		Baltimore Oriole	
Great Horned Owl	CP	Dark-eyed Junco	854	Pine Grosbeak	
Barred Owl	CP	Northern Cardinal	215	White-winged Crossbill	
Short-eared Owl		Red-winged Blackbird	43	Evening Grosbeak	2
Belted Kingfisher	3	Eastern Meadowlark			
<b>TOTAL COUNTED: 11,177 SPECIES: 62 + 20 COUNT PERIOD SPECIES = 80 species</b>					

## AVIAN RECORDS REPORT

A few issues have come up requiring items needing addressing by the members of the Avian Records Committee (A.R.C.) and we have conferred on them and we have come to agreement to move two species from ACCIDENTAL status on our checklist to REGULAR status due to their being found here at least three different times.

The first in PINK-FOOTED GOOSE! Though this is very shocking, considering that it is so uncommon that Ulster, Sullivan, Dutchess and Rockland Counties do NOT have single records of this species as far I know. Yet, we have three years of sightings! The bird, always a singular seen in the company of Canada Geese was enjoyed on:

11/15/11: feeding in a small grassy area outside Middletown

11/21/11: on the grounds of the Carmelite Friary in Middletown

02/27/13: at the old Warren Sod Farm off Lower Road, New Hampton

02/28/13: at the nearby Camel Farm

03/01/13: on Breezy Hill Road

12/02/16: at the Camel Farm

Therefore, the seasonal implication for this bird will be shown as: RR. It will precede Great White-fronted Goose, thus becoming the first bird on the list.

Next is the CASPIAN TERN and we may have been a tad slow in acting on this one because many of us have records of having seen it in the county. Some of those sightings were:

06/01/77: Joan and I were shown one at Cornwall Bay by Al (and probably Barb) Merritt. I recall the single bird sitting on a limb of a tree at the mudflats

04/08/14: TWO of them at Glenmere Lake with Curt, Matt Zeitler & Bruce Nott

04/14/16: I had one at Masterson Park, Washington Lake. Later seen by several others from the north side of the lake.

05/04/16: FOUR were seen by several again on the north side of Washington Lake

05/06/16: Again seen at above location

Therefore, this species appearances will be shown as: RR. It will take its place after Great Black-backed Gull and before Black Tern.

When these changes are put into the checklist there will also be some changes in the order of families so that the taxonomic sequencing will follow that of the American Ornithologists Union (AOU) Seventh edition of the Checklist of North American Birds through the 57 supplement. Let me personally thank Dr. Ajit Antony on behalf of our ARC for his maintenance of the online body of the checklist.

Ken McDermott

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## WALKING THE ROAD

For the past several years I have tried to walk as many days as possible. I walk up Keith Place and then west on Day Road for about ½ mile. To make the walk enjoyable I always count the number of bird species I see or hear. I record them on a calendar letting me know how many walks I have taken. For the past year or so, Fitz has joined me on most of these walks. We don't go in snow (well, not usually), sleet, rain, extreme wind or extreme heat and humidity. We go at different times of the day, depending on the time of year and temperature.

In 2014 I saw or heard 69 species. Highlights included a mini warbler fallout on May 2 when I had Yellow, Magnolia, Black-throated Blue, Yellow-rumped, Pine and Black-throated Green all foraging in some shrubs just down Day Road. A Wood Thrush and Ovenbird were heard two days later. In 2015 I had 61 species.

Last year I/we walked the road 225 days and got 66 species. (Other days of the year we walk at the Bashakill, 61/2 Station, Oil City, the beaches and trails on Cape Cod, etc.) I had 78 species last year at home. Many of the usual birds are seen coming and going as we pass my feeders. We began the year with a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker on January 1. We had already had Downy, Hairy and Pileated Woodpeckers at home! We often hear the Barred Owl calling and for the past several years we have had a pair of Red-shouldered Hawks in the area. We see and hear them frequently during the spring and summer on these walks. Other highlights last year included a soaring Bald Eagle (6/7), Northern Harrier (4/26) and Merlin (4/24) which flew over our heads as we approached the house and roosted in the oak in the back yard for quite a while. I heard Common Raven several times and had a Red-breasted Nuthatch on July 4<sup>th</sup>. The only warblers last year were Yellow-rumped and American Redstart. Both kinglets were seen with the Golden-crowned seen in early December.

So far this year we have walked 16 times and have seen or heard 22 species. There's been nothing out of the ordinary, but we can't wait for spring and migration to begin. Who knows what we will spot. We get the exercise and have fun birding along the way.

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And here's an indoor birding pastime. Go to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology website and click on bird cams. Over the past year or so, I have seen Lucifer's, Ruby-throated, Magnificent, Black-chinned, Rufous and Costa's Hummingbirds at their Texas site. I've watched Laysan Albatross grow up on Kauai. There are often other Hawaiian birds seen in the vicinity. There was a Lance-tailed Manakin in Panama. They've had Barred, Barn and Great Horned Owl nests, an American Condor nest and Osprey nests. The Ontario feeders as fun at this time of year. You can see Evening and Pine Grosbeaks, Common Redpolls and Gray Jays. Last year I saw a Ruffed Grouse on the feeder. They also have several other "cams", including two at Sapsucker Woods, so if you are indoors on a snowy day, check them out.

Jan Fitzpatrick

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## SPRING & SUMMER FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE – E.A. MEARN'S CLUB

March trips (see last Feather for details): 3/4-black dirt region; 3/11-Rye; 3/18-Bashakill; 3/25-Oil City Road.

April 1 – Eastern Orange Lakes – Meet Linda Strohl (496-3021) at the NW end of the Newburgh Walmart parking lot at 8:30 AM for a ducky day!

April 1 – Shawangunk Grasslands – We'll look for American Woodcock and maybe a hold over Short-eared Owl. Meet Tom and Jane (255-0565, 255-0324) at the refuge at 6:30 PM.

April 8 – Rye– Be at the Marshlands Preserve at 8:30 AM and Jodi Brodsky (282-1058) will show us egrets, yellowlegs, oystercatchers, grebes and loons.

April 12, Wednesday – Oil City Road – Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) at the platform at 8:30 AM for waterfowl and early migrants.

April 22 – Bashakill – Meet Joyce Depew (978-9952). Be at the Stop Sign Trail at 8:30 AM for what should be a productive day of birding.

April 29 – 6 ½ Station Road – Meet Karen Miller (381-3283) at 8:30 AM at the Heritage Trail/6 ½ Station Road parking area. Bird this gem as migration starts heating up.

May 3, Wednesday – Stewart State Forest – Meet Bill Fiero (728-5208) at Weed Road (main entrance to the forest off Rte. 207) at 8:00 AM for a walk in the forest during prime migration.

May 7, Sunday – Doodletown – Want Cerulean and Hooded Warblers? Meet Alan and Della Wells (942-5751) at the 9W pull-off at 8:00 AM.

May 10, Wednesday – Goosepond – Meet Bill Iannone (783-7467) at the Rte. 17M boardwalk trail parking lot at 7:30 AM for a great day of birding.

May 13 – Bashakill – Join Gerhard Patsch (255-5840) at 7:30 AM at the Stop Sign Trail for 70+ species and lots of warblers.

May 17, Wednesday – Hudson Highlands Discovery Center – Meet Amy Greher (783-6363) at Kenridge Farm 'Dog Park' parking lot at 8:00 AM.

May 19-20 – Break 100!! – Countdown Pot Luck at the Fitzpatrick's (496-7718) at 5:00 PM Saturday. Let them know what you are bringing and how many in your group are coming. See how many birds your team can find in 24 hours in Orange County. Ask around if you have never done this and are interested.

May 27 – Ironwood Road – Meet Dave Baker (446-4030) at the cul-de-sac at the end of Ironwood Road at 8:00 AM for Golden-winged Warbler and much more.

May 28, Sunday – Shawangunk Grasslands – Look for Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrows with Tom and Jane (255-0323 or 255-0565). Meet at the refuge at 7:30 AM.

June 3 – Hickock Brook – Meet Scott Baldinger (888-2333) at the Rte. 209 Park and Ride lot off Rte. 17 at 7:30 AM and he will lead you around this unique birding location.

June 10 – Mearns Club Picnic – Meet at Winding Hills Park, Montgomery at 12:00 noon. Bring a dish to share and a lawn chair. Contact Linda Strohl (496-3021) or Tracy Patsch (255-5840) if you have any questions.

September 16 – Doodletown – Enjoy the fall migration at this great spot with Alan and Della Wells (942-5751). Meet at the Rte. 9W pull-off at 8:30 AM.

September 23 – Bashakill – Philadelphia Vireos and Swainson's Thrushes are likely. Meet Scott Baldinger (888-2333) at the Deli Fields at 8:30 AM.

September 27, Wednesday – Stewart State Forest – Meet Bill Fiero (728-5208) at the North Ridge Road parking area at 8:30 AM to bird the varied habitats of the forest.

September 30 – Hudson Highlands Discovery Center's Kenridge Farm – Meet Dave Baker (446-4030) at 8:30 AM at the Dog Park lot for an always enjoyable and productive walk.

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### FIELD TRIP NOTES

The phone number is given for each leader. If you have any doubts about a trip happening due to weather CALL, either the night before or in the morning (the leader will be up checking the weather too, so CALL!). You can also keep an eye on the Mearns Yahoo site for trip cancellations or changes.

If you lead a trip you are responsible for sending a write up to Jan Fitzpatrick, 1 Keith Place, Campbell Hall, NY 10916 or [fjfitz@frontiernet.net](mailto:fjfitz@frontiernet.net). Please do this soon after you lead the trip. Please include the number of species seen, number of participants, weather conditions and highlights of the trip. If you post the trip online, please send an expanded report fleshing out the details of the online posting. A complete listing of species seen is not necessary. Thank you!

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