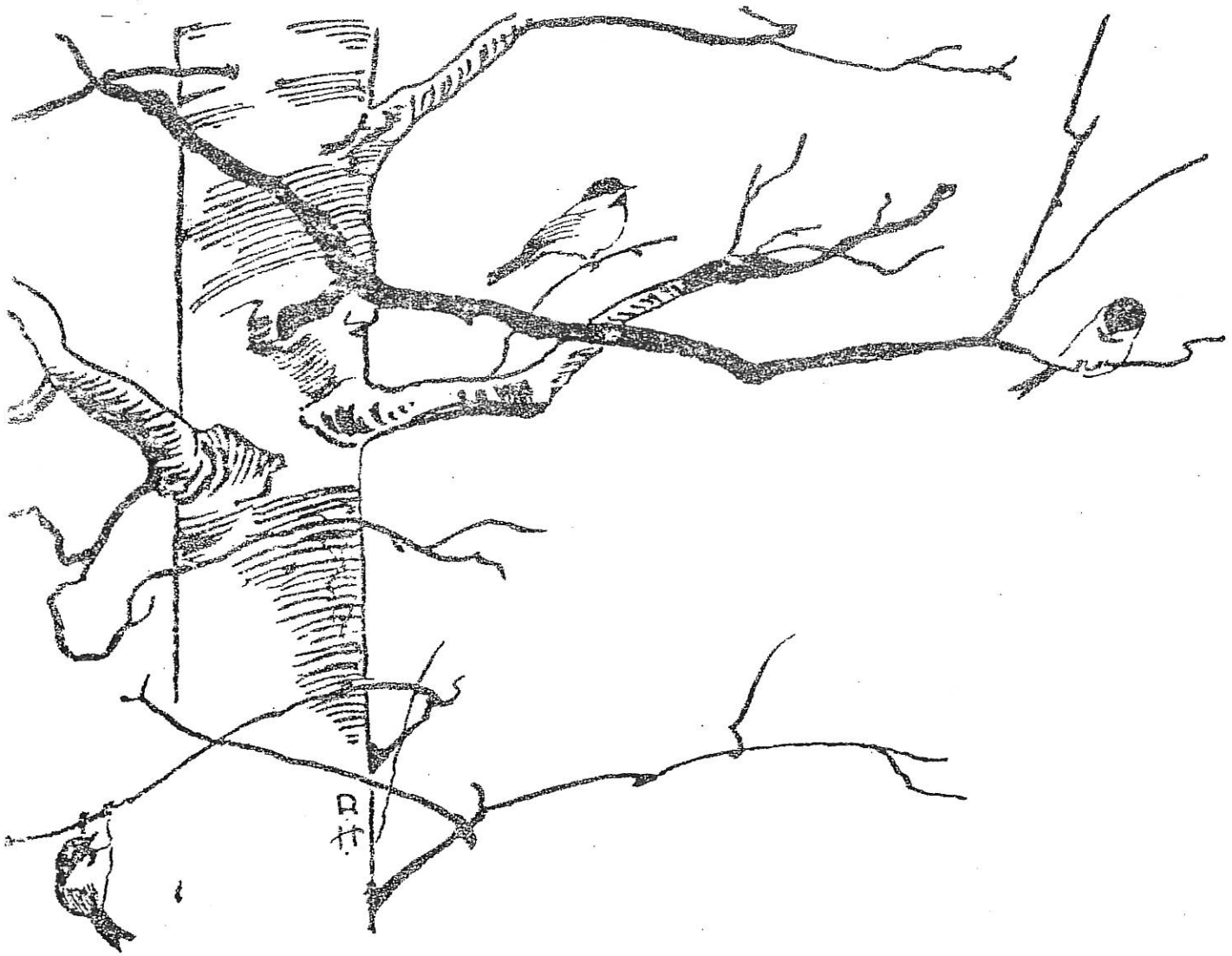


# THE ORANGE FEATHER



*Orange County, New York*

*2018 – Spring/Summer •*

**THE ORANGE FEATHER**

A publication of  
EDGAR A. MEARN'S BIRD CLUB  
Orange County, New York

**Officers and Board of Directors**

President – Karen C. Miller  
Vice President – Kathleen Ashman  
Secretary – Georgann Goulding  
Treasurer – Linda Strohl  
Outings Chair - Bob Slechta  
Program Chair - Alan Wells  
Membership Chair - Della Wells

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

February 2018

Hello everyone!

It's been a busy few months since we took the reins of leadership at the Mearns Bird Club. Our officers and members of our new board of directors are motivated, enthusiastic and dedicated. There are days that I have trouble keeping up with them, but it's all good! It's fun to work with this team and I thank them for their support.

**Kathy Ashman**, our Vice President, worked with **Ajit Antony** to set up an eBird account for Mearns that will allow us to post our outing results and share them with everyone on the trip, AND ensure that the results of these trips are included in the eBird data. Kathy is a valuable person to help toss around new ideas and has jumped in to help with the minutes.

**Georgann Goulding** stepped into the role of secretary and is helping us locate more central facilities for our monthly meetings. We hope she and Jeff are enjoying their winter in Phoenix and we look forward to their return. Also, thank you to the Gouldings for hosting our Christmas Bird Count wrap-up dinner.

**Linda Strohl** keeps us all grounded when it comes to keeping our finances in check, as any good treasurer should. She is also our Club's memory over the past many years. If I want to know who did what when, I start with Linda.

When it comes to the Mearns Club, **Bob Slechta** can get it done. He has a huge job with coordinating our weekly (sometimes twice weekly) field trips. He's always looking for new leaders and new spots to explore. Bob also coordinates our December Christmas Bird Count, which had 40 birders scouring for birds. In January he followed up with our annual Waterfowl Count. Fourteen birders participated, but the birds were not so willing. Regardless, both counts were fun and completed, and our area was represented in the larger data collection.

**Alan Wells** does an excellent job obtaining interesting speakers for our monthly meetings. He has great follow-up and attention to detail. Our Sharethon program is usually the favorite meeting of the year and 2017 was no exception. We had a GREAT turnout and many members shared their photos, online tools, artwork and even a song to express their love for birding.

**Della Wells** is working on a lot of the behind-the-scenes membership work. She finished our Mail Chimp account and is now sending out attractive and very professional messages to all of you by email. Improving our communications with our members is so important and Della is on top of it for Mearns.

As we've shared before our annual dues were due in January. The dues were raised in October to \$20 for individuals and \$30 for family memberships. If you've sent in your check, thank you so much. If not, we hope that it's just an oversight and you will do so soon. Thank you!

We have many other members who contribute their time and energy to Mearns. With this issue **Carlotta Shearson** deserves recognition for the work she did on our website. It was time for a fresh, new look and she did a wonderful job moving the page to a new platform with brighter pages, easier reading and updated photos. Most impressive was how quickly she completed it. If you have any thoughts on pieces to add that might make it even better, let us know.

We express our sincere sympathy to the family of **Dennis Murphy**, who passed in September. Anyone who met Dennis or birded with him certainly would have a story to tell or at least have a smile just from thinking about him. His death leaves a large hole in our Mearns Club family. We are grateful to all who sent a donation in his memory and we will consider the best way to use that fund to pay tribute to Dennis and his love for the birds. All suggestions are welcome.

We hope that you will join us for one or more of our field trips. They're always fun and productive. Many of our members are doing a lot of winter birding ... enjoying the short-eared owls, counting geese, sifting through gulls, and watching the eagles and other raptors. The

occasional rarity gets everyone bundled up and out in the fresh air with hopes of finding something new in the area. It's always great to see everyone, to meet new birders and to learn from each other.

We extend a special thank you to **Jan Fitzpatrick** for her hard work on the Orange Feather. Most of us would be surprised if we knew how many years she's been doing this task for the Club. We are indebted to her again with this issue.

Hope to see you all soon! Good birding to you!

  
Karen C. Miller

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### **Remembering Barb**

Fitz and I first met Barb and Al at a Pocomoke field trip in 1979. There were many birding experiences after that. There would be trips to the Bashakill and elsewhere. There were Christmas and Break 100 Count-Down Dinners where Barb always brought something delicious to share and was always one of the first to help out with set up and clean up. Then there were all those Cape Ann field trips they led. Fitz and I would often stay over Sunday evening, especially after we retired. Barb and Al would stay also and the four of us had many happy Sunday dinners together. Barb always remembered our anniversary was near that time and she would be sure to toast us at dinner. In more recent years the four of us did some local birding when they were visiting Sullivan County. We will treasure all these remembrances. Jan Fitzpatrick

Barbara Merritt was one of the most pleasant people I've even known. She wore a wonderful smile with an unassuming personality. Nature and birds, particularly fascinated her. She was always glad to help anyone. Her smile was genuine. She gladly shared in any conversation. We lost one the purist people I've ever known. Rest well, Barb. John Tramontano

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## MEETINGS

**When:** Meetings are held every 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month at 7:30 PM (except as noted)

**Where:** January-May meetings are held at Washingtonville Middle School (in the library on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor), 38 West Main Street, Washingtonville, NY 10992. 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 Drive, Cornwall, NY 12518.

**Note:** Meeting locations for 2018 are being re-evaluated and are subject to change. Please recheck the location just prior to the meeting.

3/12/18: Lee Hunter "Birding China"

4/9/18: Bill Fiero "Birding Scotland"

5/14/18: Len Rothman "Birding Trinidad and Tobago"

9/10/18: Dave Baker "Birding Northern California"

Alan Wells, Programs

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## MEMBERSHIP

At this time we would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new Club members for 2017: Kathleen Hranowsky, Beacon; Elizabeth Barret-Zahn and Jeff Zahn, Chester; Lisa Jensen, Salisbury Mills; and Susan Voge, Cornwall-on-Hudson. We ended the year with 156 members. The following members joined in 2018: Clay Spencer, Gardiner; Maria Loukeris, Glenwood, NJ; and Sheila Bogart Poughkeepsie. We look forward to birding with you and hope you will be able to attend many of our meetings and field trips in the coming months.

Linda Strohl, Membership

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EDGAR A. MEARNS BIRD CLUB  
Financial Report 2017

INCOME:

Beginning Balance-January 2016	\$ 767.36
Dues (partial 2017 and partial 2018), Donations, Interest Including \$725 in memory of Dennis Murphy	2,379.70
Total Income:	\$3,147.06

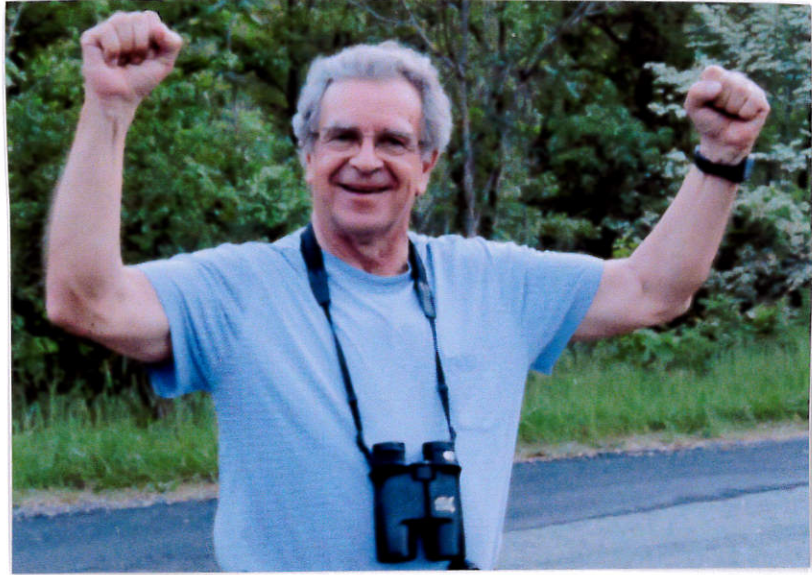
EXPENSES:

Orange Feathers: Feb-\$129.58 Aug-\$189.05	318.63
Donations: NYSOA	50.00
Young Birders	25.00
Orange County Land Trust in memory of Dorothy Slechta	50.00
Speakers: Zach Smith, Elijah Goodwin, and Dr. Elizabeth Cherry	75.00
Club Picnic	34.56
State Farm Insurance	477.97
Stamps	9.80
Bank Service Charge	2.50
Total Expenses:	\$1,043.46
Ending Balance-December 2017 (combined Checking and Savings)	\$ 2,103.60

Linda Strohl, Treasurer



Smiling faces during Break 100, 2017! Join in this year's fun.



Photos by  
Mary Buskey  
5/19-20/2017



### FALL/WINTER FIELD TRIPS PAST

Bashakill – August 28 – Joyce Depew, Leader – As our club got together at the Stop Sign Trail the area was enveloped by fog. This type of fog is typical for the time of year when days start to cool down and the evenings are quite cool as well. The temperature was around the 65 degree mark and warmed up nicely by 11:00 AM. We had 18 participants which is a very supportive response. At the trail 13 species of wood warblers were located, which was more than I expected to be seen with such a limited visibility! Nashville, Blackburnian and Bay-breasted were among the warblers seen. I took members of the group out to see the new DEC duck blind which is located on the trail to the side of the parking lot on Haven Road. While it was quiet there with no activity that day, it promises to be a good location during duck migration and also for times of open water during the winter. I've seen ducks in that cove from the Pine Boat Launch observation stand from the other direction during winter and spring. As the sun came out, Great Blue Herons were seen, an Osprey flew over us and a mature Bald Eagle was located in one of the trees off of Haven Road. A Pied-billed Grebe made a showing as well. Our trek continued with a stop at the Nature Trail and the Deli Fields off Route 209 ending around 1:00 PM for lunch. The absolute bird of the day was the **Olive-sided Flycatcher**. This flycatcher caused a stir in the group because it was reported to be on the Stop Sign Trail by John Haas after we had left there and were exploring the Nature Trail. Some participants decided to go after that bird on their own and others continued with me to the Deli Fields. The others should have stayed with me, oops! While we were at the Deli Fields enjoying some Eastern Bluebirds, Eastern Phoebe and Eastern Wood Pewees we also had an **Olive-sided Flycatcher**! Many photos were taken of this one at the Deli Fields and the bird was quite cooperative. Apparently, the group that went to the Stop Sign Trail lost the opportunity to locate the previous Olive-sided Flycatcher in time – OH WELL-that's birding for ya! All in all it was a great, beautiful day with a total of 64 species of bids. A group of remaining birders met for lunch at Danny's Restaurant after our outing was completed.

Black dirt – September 2 – Kathy Ashman, Leader – Twenty one members and two visitors (Lori and Gordon) from Forest Hills in Queens gathered at the Jolly Onion Inn parking lot for our black dirt region outing. The morning started out chilly and overcast with occasional peeks of sunshine. Our first stop was Skinners Lane where we had a large group of beautiful Bobolinks in the long grass. Mixed in among them were several Savannah Sparrows. An immature Cooper's Hawk swung over and flushed the birds, then landed in a dead tree at the far end of the field. A Gray Ghost was spotted flying over the field, but the highlight was watching an American Kestrel dive bomb a Peregrine Falcon. To our delight we got to watch the falcons take turns chasing one another. Traveling from Skinners to the old Warren Sod Farm we spotted a Ruby-throated Hummingbird and several Indigo Buntings among the phragmites. We saw a second immature Cooper's Hawk just across the Cheechunk Canal from them and had the joy of watching the Coop dive into the phragmites to try for the buntings and come up empty. At the Sod Farm we were hoping to get some shorebirds, but the only ones we saw were about 25 Killdeer doing a flyover. A rocket club was setting off their rockets with enough frequency and volume that the birds never settled down and ended up leaving the area. An immature Bald Eagle, Black and Turkey Vultures were seen in the area, as well as a Sharp-shinned Hawk. From

there we drove to the Camel Farm and our luck searching for shorebirds turned. In a small puddle we found Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, a Short-billed Dowitcher, Killdeer and Wilson's Snipe. There was also a Merlin perched in a dead tree being harassed by a Blue Jay. After observing the shorebirds for a while the Merlin decided it was hungry and dove at the shorebirds and they scattered. It came up empty, but none of the birds returned to the puddle. From there we drove to Missionlands Road where we managed to pick up an Eastern Kingbird. At Liberty Loop we picked up another Bald Eagle, this time as adult bird. The Little Blue Heron was nowhere to be seen, but we did get an immature Green Heron. By this time it was a little after noon and our stomachs were growling, so we all headed to the Harvest Inn for a bite to eat and lively conversation. After we ate, seven of us headed to the Citgo Ponds off 17M in Goshen, hoping to pick up some more shorebirds. We were in luck as the Glossy Ibis was still present. In addition, we picked up Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Pectoral Sandpiper, Least and Semipalmated Sandpipers as well as Green-winged Teal. In total for the day we had 56 different species of birds. Temperatures ranged from 44 to 67 degrees. Winds were calm to light. Birds of the day had to be the raptors with a total of ten species seen. The raptors most frequently observed were the American Kestrels. Seeing all three falcons and watching their antics was spectacular, and the beautiful immature Cooper's Hawk put on quite a show as well.

Storm King Art Center – September 9 – Bob Slechta, Leader – A bonus to our Storm King Art Center trips is that the grounds alone are worth the trip, especially during the doldrums of September. Nineteen participants tallied 38 species most of which it was a struggle to get good looks at. The most cooperative of the day were Gray Catbird, American Goldfinch, Mourning Dove, Eastern Wood Pewee, Eastern Phoebe, Blue Jay and American Crow. Other birds of note that some got to see were Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Osprey, Tree Swallow, Red-eyed Vireo, Ovenbird, Magnolia Chestnut-sided and Blackburnian Warblers and Cedar Waxwing. It was an enjoyable trip otherwise amongst the unique sculptures after which some of us retired to Painters for lunch. Bruce Nott was the only person interested in stopping at my backyard afterwards to view warblers that visit our leaf miner infested Black Gum (I call it the Great Attractor) every September. Bruce myself and my wife, Elaine, were rewarded with fabulous looks at Black-throated Green Warbler, American Redstart, 2 Magnolias, 2 Cape Mays (one female and one first winter bird), and a total of 6 Tennessee Warblers! The next day they were all gone.

Doodletown – September 16 – Alan and Della Wells, Leaders – Weather: air temperature 67 to 78 degrees; dew point temperature 66-69 degrees; no wind until 9:30 AM, gusts from 4-7 mph thereafter. When Della and I left our house, it promised to be a gorgeous day at Doodletown. The thin fog layer would undoubtedly burn off quickly and the woods would be alive with warblers and other fall migrants! As we set off, we were in high hopes. Once we arrived at Doodletown, however, things began to look a bit gloomier. A thick fog had settled into the river valley. By the 8:30 AM start time, eleven Mearns Club members (plus one future member) had arrived and we started to make our way up Gray's Hill. At our first stop, "Catbird Corner", we could tell that the usual morning chorus was definitely muted. The typical warblers, tanagers, thrushes and cardinals were all absent. As we ascended the hill we passed within feet of a white-tailed deer munching on her breakfast in silence. She did not seem the least bit disturbed by our presence. Finally, about mid-way up the hill, the fog began to burn off and we encountered our

first bit of activity—several dozen American Robins, Blue Jays and Cedar Waxwings, all feasting on the ripe fruits of Spice Bush, Devil's Walking Stick and the like. At the reservoir we scanned for the Green Heron that frequents the area, but no luck. A Scarlet Tanager and Red-eyed Vireo, however, were excellent consolation prizes. At the dam, Carol Weiss spotted a cluster of five Eastern Phoebe hanging out near the outflow stream. Further up Doodletown Road, Della spotted a flycatcher perched on a distant bare tree limb. Just a quick look but her first impression suggested it could have been an Olive-sided Flycatcher. While trying to re-find the bird for a better look, we were treated to a gorgeous Yellow-throated Vireo. Except for the more-or-less constant stream of robins, jays and waxwings, the songbird activity for the rest of the morning was rather slow. Whenever we could find an opening in the forest canopy, however, it was worth looking skyward to catch a glimpse of migrating hawks (Northern Harrier, Broad-winged and Red-tailed), Common Raven or kettling vultures (Turkey and Black). On the way back toward the cars we made a quick stop at the reservoir and found our Green Heron waiting for us, just standing on a fallen tree trunk at the shoreline. Total tally for the morning was 31 species. In all, we agreed that the birding was not spectacular, but at least it was a beautiful day for a walk in the woods! (PS – Carol informed me later that as everyone was getting into their cars and driving away, a Bald Eagle flew overhead.)

Bashakill – September 23 – Scott Baldinger, Leader – For the last several years I've done the Bashakill field trip during the third week of September and we've always had a nice mix of birds during the fall migration period. This has always been the time of year to catch Philadelphia Vireos and Swainson's Thrushes as they move through the kill along with a good array of wood warblers and assorted other species normally found here this time of year. Since 2013 we usually average between 60-65 species during this September walk. Unfortunately this year though the fall migration had been going strong, about 10 days ago the bird faucet had been turned off and the Bashakill has been extremely quiet. Highlights were few and far between. The best sighting, by far, this morning for our 21 club members were 3 cooperative American Pipits at the Deli Fields foraging along the dirt road in field one that goes out to the Stonefields Trail. The great morning light gave all in our group a chance to study their field marks, behavior and their calls. For many in today's group (including myself) these were some of the best and longest looks we've ever had of this species. The other highlights at Deli Fields was a great look at a beautiful juvenile Northern Harrier flying all around us putting on a great show and a Pileated Woodpecker flying over the fields. The Nature Trail which is always the hottest spot at the Bashakill was like everywhere else today, quiet, but at the boardwalk we did enjoy nice views at a flock of beautiful Swamp Sparrows, along with Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Magnolia Warbler. Best highlight for everyone along the Stop Sign Trail was a great looking Blue-headed Vireo and some in our group had excellent views at a Black-throated Green Warbler and another Magnolia Warbler at the parking lot. We managed only a paltry 35 species but the time spent looking at the American Pipits were enjoyable for all in our group this morning.

Stewart State Forest – September 27 – Bill Fiero, Leader – no report available

Kenridge Farm – September 30 – Dave Baker, Leader – What began as a chilly overcast day quickly degenerated into an even cooler and rainy morning. In spite of the weather adversity, 17 diehard Mearns birders showed up at the Discovery Center determined to catch the tail-end of the warbler migration south. Many of us felt that we too should be heading south, but determined as ever, we simply threw on another layer and ventured out into the field. From the beginning (while skies were still dry) we had wonderful sightings of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Cedar Waxwings, Scarlet Tanagers, Eastern Bluebirds and Eastern Phoebe. As the weather began to deteriorate, we headed over to the gazebo overlooking the Goose Pond where we sought shelter (cozy with 17 of us under the roof) and immediately started what would be an hour long show of warblers and vireos all within 40 yards of our vantage spot. Many of the birds remained out in plain sight feeding on caterpillars and smaller insects while we gazed on. When all was said and done we had recorded 12 species of warblers in two trees. Among our birds were, Black and White, Tennessee, Nashville, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Blackpoll, Palm, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Green and Canada Warblers! One could view a number of warblers simply by aiming your bins at any section of the trees and watching the birds flit in and out of the field of view. In addition to the warblers in the two trees, we had both Ruby and Golden-crowned Kinglets and Blue-headed Vireos. Later, when the rain abated, we headed over to the Muskrat Pond (reveling about our great fortune at the Goose Pond the entire trek). Gerhard has told me that you really have to end a successful field trip with a true “Glamour bird”. Mother Nature took good care of us again with great looks at a Lincoln’s Sparrow in the bushes adjacent to the pond. By the time we gathered around to do our final count, we had tallied 49 species. Thanks to all our fellow birders who made this marvelous outing all the more memorable.

Winding Waters – October 4 – Jeff Goulding, Leader – cancelled due to rain

6 ½ Station Road – October 7 - Karen Miller, Leader – Fifteen birders met at the Heritage Trail on 6 ½ Station Road. It was a warm morning with temperatures in the 70’s and no fog this year as we started towards the Audubon site on the trail. We picked up most of the regulars: Palm Warblers, Swamp Sparrows, a Northern Mockingbird, Tufted Titmice, Northern Flickers, Eastern Phoebe, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Gray Catbirds, Tree Swallows and others. Not far down the trail we spotted a couple of young Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, which kept our attention for a bit. Beyond that we watched two Marsh Wrens moving through the cattails at the edge of the marsh. Jim Clinton, an Ulster County birder who joined us for the morning, wandered back on the trail following the sound of a Scarlet Tanager and was lucky enough to spot it in the treetops. Waterfowl made a decent showing as we scanned the waters of the marsh and peered through the vegetation to the Citgo Pond. We added Wood and American Black Ducks, one Northern Pintail, an American Coot and Green-winged Teal to our list. Three Great Blue Herons, a Killdeer and seven Pectoral Sandpipers were also seen. As we headed back to the parking area a Northern Harrier flew low over the marsh and landed in a tree at the far end. It was very confiding and watched us watching her while we took several pictures of this beautiful bird. We moved across the road to the end of the Heritage Trail. Rusty Blackbirds, many Yellow-rumps and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, another sapsucker and other woodpeckers were



highlights on this piece of the trail. It was a pleasant morning of birding with great birders. Our list of 45 species was not overwhelming but we enjoyed the birds we found.

Goosepond - October 14 – Bill Iannone, Leader – Fortunately the shower occurred before our trip began, but we still had some mist and drizzle although it turned out to be a pleasantly warm day with plenty of clouds but good visibility for birding. Twelve members made the trip to the boardwalk on 17M and the trail off Laroe Road which was widened, cleared of brush, and featured a repaired bridge with the help of 26 volunteers. The boardwalk has developed into an excellent spot where we gathered approximately 30 species before going to the main trail. The sparrows were very active as we counted Field, Savannah, Song, Swamp, White-throated and White-crowned Sparrows. As we were enjoying the sparrow activity, Bob Slechta viewed a NELSON' SPARROW as the bird popped his head out of the grass. We can usually rely on getting bluebirds at the boardwalk as well as Cedar Waxwings and some fly-overs like Wood Duck and Red-winged Blackbirds. Some warblers were still around: Common Yellowthroat, Palm, Yellow-rumped and a very nice Tennessee Warbler. The woodpeckers were well represented by Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy and Pileated as well as Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. The boardwalk is a good place for close-up viewing of birds but also for the use of a scope for the tree lines that are at a good distance away. As we entered the main trail on Laroe Road we observed plenty of sparrow activity on the leaf covered trail as well as thrush species camouflaged among the leaves. It was a delight to see a large flock of kinglets, both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned actively feeding along the trail. The Golden-crowned Kinglets were proudly displaying their yellow and orange caps. Forty-five species were counted for a successful and enjoyable day of birding.

Croton Point – October 25 – Jodi Brodsky, Leader – no report available

Oil City Road – October 28 – Kathleen Ashman, Leader – Twelve members gathered at the Wallkill NWR platform at 8:30 AM on a clear, crisp morning. There were wisps of fog over the marshland and bright blue skies overhead. At the platform was a large flock of Mallards with a few Canada Geese thrown in the mix. There were many sparrows in the shrubs surrounding the parking area and we managed to spot large numbers of Song, Savannah and Swamp Sparrows along with a couple of immature White-crowned Sparrows. Both a male and female Northern Harriers were seen hunting over the marsh. Other flyovers while we were at the platform included several large skeins of Canada Geese, a Common Raven, Killdeer, a flock of American Pipits and a Mute Swan. Birds seen along the one mile stretch of the New York portion of the Liberty Loop included Eastern Bluebird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Mockingbird, Black Vulture and Sharp-shinned Hawk. As we walked through the wooded portion on the western side of the refuge in New Jersey we had Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets White-throated Sparrows, and both Downy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers. The water levels were very low throughout the refuge which made viewing waterfowl difficult. We did manage to find Pied-billed Grebes, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, Northern Shoveler, American Black Duck, American Wigeon and an American Coot. Our only shorebirds for the day were the Killdeer which we had as they flew past the platform. As we traveled up the eastern side of the trail we spotted the male Northern Harrier attacking a Turkey



Vulture which was exciting to watch. We walked the entire loop, a distance of 3 miles and saw a total of 48 species. Weather at the start was 34 degrees with calms winds and at 12:00 PM when we finished it was 64 degrees with southerly winds at 8 mph gusting to 17 mph. After completing the trip we adjourned to the Harvest Inn in Pine Island for lively conversation and a recap of the trip. The bird of the day had to be the Mallards due to their sheer numbers throughout the refuge. When we finished lunch, Mayangela Buskey and I took a side trip to Indiana Road hoping to have some better looks at American Pipits. Sure enough we were in luck and the Pipits were on the ground feeding in a field near the road. A Northern Harrier flew over and flushed the birds and Mary and I estimated there was a flock of about one hundred that took flight. We also managed to pick up three Eastern Meadowlarks and an American Kestrel. It was a most enjoyable day for birding.

Black dirt – November 11 – David Baker, Leader – Eleven hearty Mearns members braved the chill and the winds to bird the black dirt region of Orange County. With reports of longspur, Snow Bunting and Horned Lark coming in earlier in the morning we made our first destination the old Warren Sod Farm. Having scouted out the region the day before, I had an area in mind where larks were present in decent numbers. We were not disappointed as we located at least 14 of these winter visitors in the scraped sod fields. Among the larks we found at least one Snow Bunting to add to our list. Continuing on the dirt roadway along the Wallkill River we found a good number of sparrows including Song, Swamp and Savannah. Several nice raptor sightings were also had along this stretch including Red-Tailed, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned. We tried hard to morph a few high fliers into Golden Eagles, but our efforts were in vain. We then headed over to scout out the fields along the Turtle Bay area. Along the newly graveled Lynch Avenue we found some more sparrows as hoped for, including another returning visitor for the winter, the White-throated Sparrow. Northern Cardinals, Brown-headed Cowbirds Red-winged Blackbirds and good numbers of American Goldfinches were also found along this stretch. We made our way over to Missionlands Road to see if any other winter birds might be found in the black dirt. We did find good numbers of Horned Larks flitting from furrow to furrow and then magically disappearing down into the tilled soil. By now it was noon and time to head over to our favorite lunch spot, the Harvest Inn. While the numbers for the day did not set any Mearns Club records (30 total species), the quality of many of our birds and the joy of being back out in the crisp cold air of late autumn with fellow Mearnsers made the trip well worth our time and effort.

Eastern Orange lakes – November 18 – Bob Slechta, Leader – It was a chilly start at the Walmart "pocket" marsh, but it was also the most rewarding spot for the 14 of us. Walmart produced the best mix of ducks and close up viewing of Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Hooded Merganser and some fly over Common Mergansers. Beaver Dam Lake and Washington Lake on the other hand were quiet as was the marsh on Route 207 where we did pick up a surprising 6 Pied-billed Grebes of which we tallied 9 for the trip. Crestview Lake had a few Ruddy Ducks and a large number of Ring-necked Ducks who unfortunately took flight once we got out of our cars. Our second best stop of the day was Brown's Pond with Bufflehead, Ruddies, Hooded Mergansers, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons and best of all, a pair of Common Goldeneyes. Throw in

Canada Goose and Mute Swan and we tallied 14 species of waterfowl. Not bad. Our total species count for the trip was 46 with notables of Sharp-shinned Hawk, Belted Kingfisher, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Dark-eyed Junco and White-throated Sparrow. After the trip we all enjoyed a nice repast at the Neptune Diner just in time for the rain to start.

Shawangunk Grasslands – November 25 – Tom and Jane, Leaders – Seventeen Mearns members met on a very pleasant afternoon at the Grasslands hoping to see Short-eared Owls. Some of us arrived early since the scheduled meeting time left only a little time before the onset of sunset and darkness. Shortly thereafter at least 3 and possibly 4 owls were seen flying as well as perched. From time to time the perched owls would be buzzed by a Northern Harrier. One perched owl was buzzed numerous time by a persistent harrier before it decided to vacate the post where it was perched. Four to six harriers were present including one adult male. A large thick cloud moved in on the refuge cutting off much of the rather faint light so it became much harder to see the birds. This same cloud provided us with a spectacular sunset to end the trip.

Cape Ann, MA – December 2 & 3 – Jodi Brodsky, Leader – After a bowl of the best fish chowder in town, we headed over to Halibut Point State Park in Rockport. It was a little chilly and windy which is typical for being in the northeast by the ocean this time of year. We had great looks at Common Eider, Harlequin Ducks and Common Loons. On Saturday morning we headed over to Parker River. We took our time scoping the Atlantic Ocean and were rewarded with many Common Loons, Red-throated Loons and Horned Grebes in addition to a group of five Razorbills. Along the road there were few land birds. There were two Snowy Owls a Hellcat; one on each end of the dike. Plus we found three perched Peregrine Falcons. A white-eyed Vireo had been reported and as the group headed out of the refuge some folks were lucky to see it. Others were lingering and were treated to a very close Short-eared Owl show. On Sunday, we birded the priority hotspots along Cape Ann. Eastern Lighthouse Point seems to be my Black Guillemot hotspot. This is the third consecutive year finding at least one passed the dog leg. As we were enjoying the Black Guillemot a pair of Razorbills popped up so close I shouted out from being startled. The grand finale was the closest King Eider I've ever seen. The adult drake was across the street from the Elks Lodge. It was so close we were able to observe the scapular points on his back. By the end of the weekend 16 friends tallied 66 species of birds.

Recently I came across my field trip notes from November 2012. That was the best weekend ever with amazing winter finches on Plum Island including Pine Siskin, Common Redpolls, crossbills and a Pine Grosbeak. It is a bittersweet memory since that was also the last time Al and Barb Merritt led the trip. My thoughts and prayers go to Al at the passing of Barb. She was a warm and generous person who loved many.

Eastern Orange Christmas Count - December 16 – Bob Slechta, Compiler – see separate report

Duck Count – January 13 – submitted by Bob Slechta – The weather leading up to this year's Waterfowl Count gave us quite the ride. Two weeks of bitter cold locking up all the lakes, ponds and even streams, plus 2-6 inches of snow cover all to be upended by a good rain storm and 60 degrees the day before the count. Not enough to open up the lakes though. As a result, we had

lower numbers and less variety of waterfowl with the exception of Canada Geese and Mallard whose numbers were higher than the previous two years. Perhaps better coverage this year with twelve participants in five groups was the reason. The tally for this year's count was: Canada Goose-5249; Mallard-555; Mute Swan-4; Wood Duck-1; American Black Duck-5; Northern Pintail-1; Bufflehead-2; Hooded Merganser-6; Common Merganser-114; with a total of 5937 individuals. Hopefully we will have milder weather and open water next year.

Eagle Trip – January 27 – Gerhard Patsch, Leader – Cold January temperatures brought snow and ice to the lower Hudson River Valley. Inland lakes were a frozen, as was most of the river north of Poughkeepsie resulting in a significant concentration of Bald Eagles in the Hudson Highlands. When Tracy and I arrived at the Iona Island Scenic overlook, Kathy Ashman and Bruce Nott were already there and had scoped a half dozen eagles. Within 15 minutes 24 members and friends had gathered in time to view 6 Bald Eagles on a huge slab of ice below the overlook. After a very good start and with our expectations and excitement in high gear we were off to Annsville Circle and China Pier. There was plenty of ice at Peekskill Bay and thanks to the sharp eyes of our group we spotted eagles near and far. At least 12 Great Cormorants were also observed in the icy bay among the eagles and Common Mergansers. We enjoyed more close looks of eagles and gulls at Charles Point Marina before heading to Verplank Point across the Hudson River from Stony Point Battlefield. At this stop we enjoyed spectacular sightings and numbers of eagles. We counted 32 Bald Eagles! The nearby Waterfront Park overlooking Greens Cove gave us more eagles and a Common Loon and a close flyover Cooper's Hawk to add to Liza and Ajit Antony's Raptor Survey. At Georges Island we found Common Goldeneye, Buffleheads, 6 more eagles and a surprise glamour bird, a Red-throated Loon! With a swing by Oscawana Park we made our way to Croton Point Park. A short stroll from the parking lot rewarded us with a lucky, super close look at a rufous morph Eastern Screech-Owl! A quick stop, before our lunch break, at the Croton RR Station trestle gave us American Black Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Buffleheads and, of course, more eagles and gulls. After lunch we drove to Croton Reservoir, our final destination. It was getting late and colder as more eagles were flying in to settle down for the night at one of their nearby roosts. We had a grand day of winter birding with a total of 145 Bald Eagle sightings! Other notables included: Golden-crowned Kinglet, Northern Flicker, Common Raven, Black and Turkey Vultures and Carolina Wren giving us a total species count of 42. Thanks to all for your help in finding the birds and to Bob Slechta for picking the perfect day for our field trip.

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## EASTERN ORANGE CHRISTMAS COUNT

12/16/17

Thankfully this year's Christmas Count went off without a hitch, i.e. No Snow Storm! And everyone was able to get out and enjoy the day counting birds. While the tally of several species was a bit lower than usual, the biggest number upset this year was the disappearance of the Newburgh crow roost...zip, gone, zilch...nowhere to be found. How and why they decided to up and leave is a good query to be pursued. Otherwise we had a respectable species tally of 79 or 83 with count week birds despite our lakes and ponds being 95% iced over. The lone exception, thankfully, was Washington Lake where a good mix of ducks were still about to up our count. A couple of rare species seldom seen on our count like Common Loon, Red-headed Woodpecker, and Lapland Longspur made an appearance this year, while the number of Black Vultures just keeps climbing reaching a record high of 149 this year. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was another record setter on the cunt with 25 reported, while Northern Flicker numbers continue to languish from their previous tallies over 10 years back. It's always interesting to see how the count will turn out especially knowing you will find out at the end of the day's Count Down Pot-luck Dinner, this year held at the lovely home of the Goulding's. We all thank Jeff and Georgeann profusely for their hospitality. I'd also like to thank Ajit Antony for always bringing his laptop providing us with instantaneous results to relish and saving me a lot of work!

Bob Slechta, Compiler

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Photo by Joyce Depew, Christmas Count, 12/16/17 with Linda Strohl

# Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Christmas Count

December 16, 2017



SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL
Common Loon	1	<i>Virginia Rail</i>		American Pipit	
Pied-billed Grebe		American Coot		Cedar Waxwing	47
Horned Grebe		Killdeer		Yellow-rumped Warbler	1
Red-necked Grebe		Wilson's Snipe		<i>Common Yellowthroat</i>	
Double-crested Cormorant	1	<i>Bonaparte's Gull</i>		Wilson's Warbler	
Great Cormorant		Ring-billed Gull	754	<i>Yellow-breasted Chat</i>	
Great Blue Heron	4	Herring Gull	22	Eastern Towhee	
Great Egret		Iceland Gull		American Tree Sparrow	53
Snow Goose	CW	Great Black-backed Gull	18	Field Sparrow	
Canada Goose	3624	Rock Pigeon	452	Savannah Sparrow	
Mute Swan	14	Mourning Dove	286	Fox Sparrow	1
Wood Duck	10	Eastern Screech Owl	1	Song Sparrow	51
Gadwall	6	Great Horned Owl	CW	Swamp Sparrow	2
American Wigeon	5	Barred Owl	4	White-throated Sparrow	441
American Black Duck	11	Short-eared Owl		White-crowned Sparrow	
Mallard	845	Belted Kingfisher	2	Dark-eyed Junco	1195
<i>Blue-winged Teal</i>		Red-headed Woodpecker	1	Lapland Longspur	1
Northern Shoveler		Red-bellied Woodpecker	84	Snow Bunting	1
Northern Pintail	2	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	25	Northern Cardinal	119
Green-winged Teal		Downy Woodpecker	103	Red-winged Blackbird	49
Canvasback		Hairy Woodpecker	12	Eastern Meadowlark	
Redhead		Northern Flicker	24	Rusty Blackbird	
Ring-necked Duck	50	Pileated Woodpecker	7	<i>Brewer's Blackbird</i>	
Lesser Scaup		Eastern Phoebe		Common Grackle	6
White-winged Scoter		<i>Say's Phoebe</i>		Brown-headed Cowbird	50
Black Scoter		<i>Northern Shrike</i>		<i>Baltimore Oriole</i>	
Long-tailed Duck		Blue Jay	297	Pine Grosbeak	
Common Goldeneye	CW	American Crow	548	Purple Finch	
Bufflehead	1	Fish Crow	15	House Finch	233
Common Merganser	129	Common Raven	2	Common Redpole	
Hooded Merganser	38	Horned Lark	305	Pine Siskin	
Red-breasted Merganser	CW	Black-capped Chickadee	118	American Goldfinch	118
Ruddy Duck	1	Tufted Titmouse	154	Evening Grosbeak	
Black Vulture	149	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1	House Sparrow	830
Turkey Vulture	46	White-breasted Nuthatch	80		
Bald Eagle	11	Brown Creeper	1	Additional Species:	
Norther Harrier	1	Carolina Wren	26		
Sharp-shinned Hawk	7	<i>House Wren</i>			
Cooper's Hawk	11	Winter Wren	2		
Northern Goshawk		Golden-crowned Kinglet	27		
Red-shouldered Hawk	9	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	3		
<i>Broad-winged Hawk</i>		Eastern Bluebird	35		
Red-tailed Hawk	60	Hermit Thrush	1		
Rough-legged Hawk		<i>Wood Thrush</i>			
American Kestrel	3	American Robin	114		
<i>Merlin</i>		<i>Varied Thrush</i>			
Peregrine Falcon	1	Gray Catbird	1		
Ring-necked Pheasant		Northern Mockingbird	12	Number Individuals	14429
Ruffed Grouse		Brown Thrasher			
Wild Turkey	85	European Starling	2567	TOTAL SPECIES:	79

Italicized Species Require Details



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

March trips (see last Feather for details): 3/3 Rye; 3/10 Black dirt; 3/17 Bashakill; 3/24 Oil City Road; 3/31 Eastern Orange lakes.

April 7 – Rye & Marshlands – Meet Bob Slechta (534-7029) at Playland at 8:30 AM for loons, grebes and egrets.

April 14 – Winding Waters – Kathy Ashman (294-6140) will meet you at the parking lot at 8:00 AM. Look for sparrows, kinglets and maybe our first warblers.

April 21 – 6 ½ Station Road – Meet Karen Miller (381-3283) at 8:30 AM as migrants start to dribble in.

April 21 – Shawangunk Grasslands – Tom and Jane will meet you at 7:00 PM for our spring woodcock trip. (255-0323 or 255-0565)

April 28 – Bashakill – Meet Joyce Depew (978-9952) at 8:00 AM at the Stop Sign Trail. Catch the first big movement of spring migrants.

May 2, Wednesday – Stewart State Forest – Meet Bill Fiero (728-5208) at Barron Road South off Route 208 at 8:00 AM and check out a different area of Stewart as migration heats up.

May 5- Kenridge Farm – Bob Slechta (534-7029) will lead. Meet at the “Dog Park” at 7:30 AM for a great day of birding in peak migration. For those willing Bob will lead us on a leisurely walk in Black Rock Forest (not a death march) after Kenridge and a bite to eat.

May 9, Wednesday – Doodletown – Meet Della and Alan Wells (942-5751) at the 9W pull-off at 8:00 AM for a great walk with Cerulean and Hooded Warblers guaranteed. Kentucky Warbler is possible as is much more.

May 12 – Bashakill – Join Gerhard Patsch (255-5840) at 7:30 AM at the Stop Sign Trail for a great day of birding at the region's premier migrant highway.

May 16, Wednesday – Goosepond – Meet Bill Iannone (783-7467) at the Route 17M Boardwalk trail at 7:30 AM for a really good day of birding.

May 18 7 19 – 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. Create a team or join one and see how many birds you can ID in Orange County from 4:00 PM Friday to 4:00 PM Saturday.

May 23, Wednesday – Kenridge – Meet Amy Greher (783-6363) at 7:30 AM at the “Dog Park”. This is a good time of year and spot for a Mourning Warbler or Grey-cheeked Thrush.

May 26 – Boxbaum and Rio – Meet Bob Slechta (534-7029) at the D & H Canal Park at 7:0 AM to explore the far western reaches of Orange County.

June 2 – Shawangunk Grasslands – Be at the Grasslands at 7:30 AM for grassland birds, especially sparrows. Tom and Jane will lead (255-0323 or 255-0565).

June 9- Club Picnic – Meet at Winding Hills Park in Montgomery at 12:00 noon. Please bring a dish to share and a lawn chair. Contact Linda Strohl (496-3021) or Tracy Patsch (255-5840) if you have any questions.

August 11 & 12 – Bombay Hook and environs – Contact Jodi Brodsky (282-1058 or [jsbbirder@gmail.com](mailto:jsbbirder@gmail.com)) for details. Shorebirds will be the highlight of the trip.  
August 25 – Oil City Road – Joyce Depew (978-9952) will be at the platform at 8:00 AM for early migrants and shorebirds.  
September 1 – Black dirt – Meet David Baker (446-4030) at 8:30 AM at the Jolly Onion. Buff-breasted Sandpipers will be our target.  
September 8 – Stewart State Forest – Bill Fiero (728-5208) will lead. Meet him at the North Ridge Road parking area for warblers, thrushes, vireos, sparrows etc.  
September 22 – Bashakill – Meet Scott Baldinger (888-2333) at the Deli Fields at 8:30 AM. We will look for thrushes, sparrows, warblers and Philadelphia Vireo.  
September 29 – Winding Waters – Kathy Ashman (294-6140) will be at the trail parking lot at 8:00 AM. Connecticut Warbler and Lincoln's Sparrow are possible.

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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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