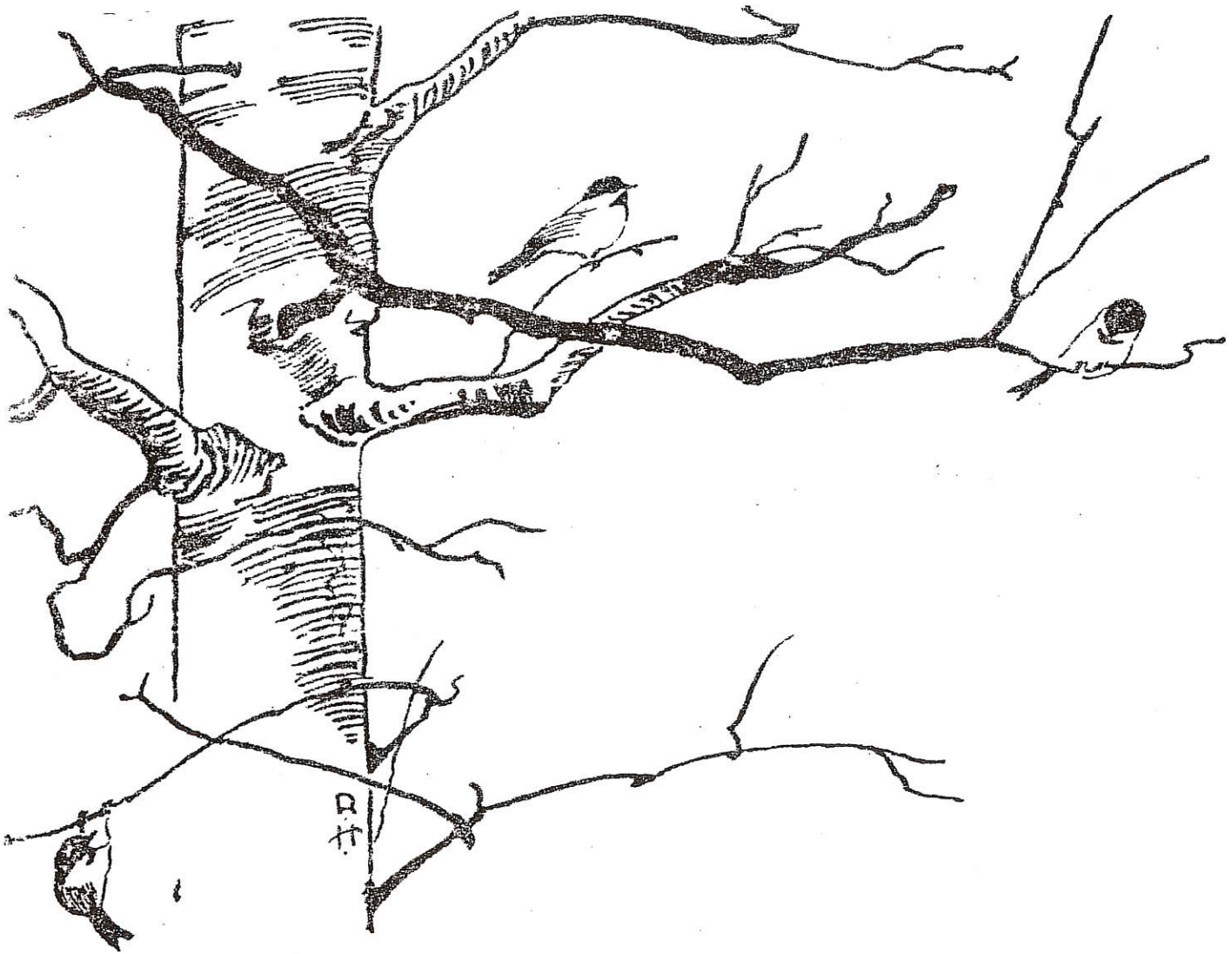


THE ORANGE FEATHER



Orange County, New York

2019 – Spring/Summer

THE ORANGE FEATHER

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

Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello, everyone!

One thing that I like about birding is the diversity. It seems that every week we are in search of a different bird. Recently, we were fortunate to find Common Redpolls in Sullivan County, and then Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks, sometimes in great numbers. The occasional Barred Owl and a Goshawk looking for a meal were mixed in.

In Orange County, a Say's Phoebe drew us to the Winding Waters Trail while a Black Phoebe was present not far away, in Montague, New Jersey. The Short-eared Owls are back and doing their dance with the Northern Harriers in the Black Dirt Region and at the Shawangunk Grasslands in Ulster County. Rough-legged Hawks are also on the list of birds to see now. Large numbers of Bald Eagles, and even a Golden Eagle, can be seen along the Hudson River and in upper Sullivan County. Birders are flocking to the shores of the Hudson to sift through the large flocks of gulls in search of an Iceland Gull, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, or a Glaucous Gull.

Delaware County recently gave us the opportunity to see a Golden-crowned Sparrow in Downsville, and what excitement birders brought to this small town. Even during this traditionally slow time of the year, there is usually an interesting bird or two to chase.

For me, much of the enjoyment of birding is seeing all of you out there. I consider myself lucky to have met such interesting, kind people. I am always impressed by your commitment to the birds and to birding. You continually advocate for and demonstrate that you care for these beautiful creatures of nature. I have learned so much from you, and from the birds, too. One

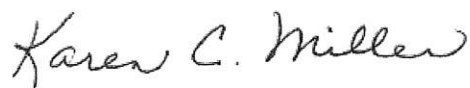
thing is sure; I will never find my retirement years boring. Birding always offers more to see, more to learn, and more time with great friends. Each outing brings something new.

This year, we are celebrating 60 years of our Mearns members' dedication to our avian friends. The club's record is quite impressive when you stop to think of all that we have accomplished together in the birding world. The fact that we have been around for 60 years, currently with more than 150 members, is worth celebrating.

Our Board will soon be finalizing plans for our anniversary dinner on June 1 at DeLancey's in Goshen. We are honored that Shai Mitra has agreed to be our keynote speaker. Please save the date. We'll have more to come shortly about the dinner and about Shai.

Thank you to everyone for all that you do as a birder and a Mearns member. Special thanks to **Jan Fitzpatrick** for compiling yet another edition of the *Orange Feather*.

Hope to see you out there soon! Enjoy your birding!



Karen C. Miller

MEMBERSHIP

We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new Mearns Bird Club members for 2019: Marjorie Lawton, Bloomingburg; Claudia Martin; Michael Cornec and family, Irvington; Lyn Nelson, Monroe; Anthony Macchiarola, LaGrangeville; Roger Flaum, Middletown; James Clinton; Kingston; Charlene Campiglia and James Reilly, Rochelle Park, NJ; and Richard Van Tieghem, Warwick. We hope you can come out to as many field trips and meetings as possible to enjoy the informative and friendly birding events with us.

Reminder: 2019 dues were due on January 1st. Contact Linda Strohl if you owe dues.

Linda Strohl, Treasurer

EDGAR A. MEARN'S BIRD CLUB
Financial Report 2018

INCOME:

Beginning Balance-January 2018	\$ 2,103.60
Dues (partial 2018 and partial 2019), Donations, Interest	2,146.51
Total Income:	\$4,250.11

EXPENSES:

Orange Feathers: Feb-\$150.43 and Aug-\$124.62	275.05
Donations: NYSOA	50.00
Young Birders	25.00
Museum of the Hudson Highlands	100.00
Club Picnic	60.00
State Farm Insurance	477.97
Stamps	20.00
HDMI cable and postage	37.63
Dinner Deposit	200.00
Total Expenses:	\$1,245.65

ENDING BALANCE-December 2018 (Checking, Savings, \$800 Dennis Murphy donations)	\$3,004.46
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Linda Strohl, Treasurer

Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Programs – 2019

When: Meetings are held every 2nd Monday of the month at 7:00 pm (except as noted)

Where:

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

When	Where	Who	Title/Topic
2019			
01/14/19	Washingtonville	Max Garfinkle	Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warbler Studies in the Highlands
02/11/19	Washingtonville	NO PROGRAM	School Closure
03/11/19	Washingtonville	Kathy Schneider	Birding the Hudson Valley
04/08/19	Washingtonville	Bill Fiero	Birding Poland
05/13/19	Washingtonville	TBA	TBA
06/01/19 (Sat) Tentative	TBA	60 th Anniversary Celebration	Dr. Shai Mitra - Recent changes in status and distribution of NYS Birds
SUMMER BREAK			
09/11/19	Washingtonville	TBA	TBA
10/09/19	Washingtonville	Alan Wells (?)	The Orange Challenge (?)
11/13/19	Washingtonville	Dave Baker	Birding Panama with EAMC
12/11/19	Washingtonville	Members Night	Mearns Share-a-Thon

Alan Wells, Programs



Photo by Karen Miller

FALL/WINTER FIELD TRIPS PAST

Oil City – August 25 – Joyce Depew, Leader – A group of about 18 hearty, experienced participants trekked with me around Liberty Loop beginning at the platform and heading along the west side first. It was in the lower 70's to 80's with hazy sun and little wind. The conditions at the loop were a lot different this from the previous three years where conditions were extremely dry due to droughts. Now with plenty of water in the preserve there was a lack of shorebirds at the loop except for Killdeer. I had been searching this particular area a couple of times in the previous two weeks with Mary B. and at those times bird activity appeared lacking since the Spoonbill left, leaving us with only a small flock of Great Egrets and a Belted Kingfisher around to enjoy. I considered changing this outing for that reason. Bob Slectha and I talked over my concerns earlier this week and we decided to leave the outing as planned, with the option that if Liberty Loop turned out to be a bust, I'd lead the group to where the shorebirds had been reported over the last several days on a few black dirt farms. Well...SURPRISE JOYCE! The birds came out of their hiding places at the loop! We ended up with 58 species and a lifer Least Bittern for me on the pond in the back of the refuge which was located by Jim Clinton. This bird was so cooperative that most participants were able to view it and we spent about 20 minutes doing so. There was plenty of activity with over 100 Bobolinks flying around and an increase in the number of great Egrets and about a dozen or so GREEN HERONS, both juvenile and adults. The Common Moorhen (or is it Gallinule this week?) were numerous as well. Hopefully scientists will arrive at one name only for this species. All in all, the outing turned out great and it ended with an American Kestrel and a Merlin out by the parking lot at the top of a telephone pole. What more can anyone ask for in 3 hours and change?

Black dirt – September 1 – David Baker, Leader – As we move into the fall migration period, we were hopeful of finding migrating shorebirds stopping by to refuel at the black dirt farms of Pine Island and Warwick. Each day brings new reports of county rarities such as Baird's, White-rumped, Buff-breasted and Upland Sandpipers. With high hopes, 9 Mearns members assembled at the Jolly Onion Inn parking lot on an overcast morning to search for whatever the day had to offer. Our first area of interest was Skinners Lane. Scouting the area yesterday, we had found both American Golden and Black-bellied Plovers. So we quickly trained our scopes out onto the furrowed black dirt. The plovers seen yesterday had been replaced with literally hundreds, if not thousands of Bank and Tree Swallows. Among them it was possible to find Barn Swallows and even an occasional Cliff Swallow. We all remarked that none of us had ever seen that many Bank Swallows assembled in one spot in the past. But it is that time of year for swallows to gather and begin their journey south, so anything is possible. As we scoped out the swallow activity one of our number managed to find several Buff-breasted Sandpipers far out in the field. It took some hard work and a little creativity to initially identify these birds at such a distance, but the final determination was that these were in fact Buff-breasted Sandpipers-one of our target species for the day. Along with the buffies, we had good numbers of Killdeer picking through the sod as well. Heading out of the Skinners Lane area, we picked up several distant American Kestrels, American Goldfinch, Cedar Waxwings, several Red-tailed Hawks and Northern Harriers. From here, we moved down to Lynch Avenue near the Turtle Bay area. Turtle Bay had been recently plowed and migrating shorebirds have not been showing up as they had earlier

in late August, so we concentrated our efforts on the woodland birds along the dirt roadway of Lynch Avenue. Our first sighting was of an Olive-sided Flycatcher which was cooperative enough to give many of us decent scope looks and some good photos. Further along the road, we stopped to hunt for migrating warblers often found here at this time of year, but the area was pretty quiet. Things picked up a bit a little further along the road where we had quick looks at a House Wren, Song and Savannah Sparrows, Eastern Wood-Pewee, an empi which will remain unnamed, American Crows, Blue Jays and more waxwings. One of the highlights was hearing a Great Horned Owl calling across the fields. We tried in vain to get a visual, but his continual "Who's awake? Me too" calling had us searching for some time. After the traditional lunch at the "Harvest" where we all reminisced about our late friend, Dennis Murphy, we made a quick tour of Mission Lands Road and the platform at Oil City where we found Great Egrets, Common Moorhen, a distant Merlin and a Northern Mockingbird. The final count for the day was a total of 47 species.

Stewart State Forest – September 8 – Bill Fiero, Leader – 11 participants birded the state forest on a cool, grey, damp morning. As the previous week was oppressively hot and humid, it was hoped that the cold front would bring in some early migrants. We decided to take the loop from Ridge Road north down Maple Lane to the Great swamp boardwalk and back. The highlight bird, an immature LITTLE BLUE HERON, was easily seen in the wetland on Maple Lane within ¼ mile from our starting point. This is the first record for this bird at Stewart, and at the time had been there for 10 days. Continuing along wetland, forest and field habitats, the birding was slower than expected, but a single Green-winged Teal and 5 Solitary Sandpipers were welcome sightings. Numbers on most species were down, and yielded few surprises, although 3 Ruby-throated Hummingbirds, a Red-breasted Nuthatch and a female Indigo Bunting were nice finds. We covered 3.8 miles and tallied 39 species, with some of us enjoying lunch in Maybrook. Stewart State Forest is fun to bird, and from time to time produces nice surprises. Our species list can be found on Ebird.

Bashakill – September 22 – Scott Baldinger, Leader – 23 members enjoyed a nice fall migration walk on the Bashakill this morning. We found 7 species of wood warbler highlighted by 2 beautiful Bay-breasted Warblers on the section of the Long Path just off the Nature Trail. Other warblers seen included Black-throated Blue and Green, Black and White, Common Yellowthroat, American Redstart and Magnolia Warbler. We had a good mix of raptors with Osprey, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawks, Merlin and Bald Eagle seen. Other highlights of note included Wood Duck, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Great Egret, Common Raven, Fish Crow, Blue-headed and Red-eyed Vireos, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina and Marsh Wrens, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Wood Thrush, Purple Finch, Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Also of note were good numbers of Blue Jays (250) on the move today. We finished with 50 species on the field trip.

Winding Waters – September 29 – Kathy Ashman, Leader – Fifteen members met in the parking lot of the Wallkill River NWR's Winding Waters Trail. It proved to be a spectacular morning of birding which began with a warbler fallout at the trailhead. There were birds everywhere we looked and the only reason we moved on was because the birds did. We had fabulous looks at

Northern Parulas, Magnolias, Chestnut-sided, Blackpoll, Palm, Yellow-rumped, American Redstart, Common Yellowthroat, Black and White and Ovenbird. Bob Slechta spotted what was most likely a Yellow-breasted Chat, but the look was so fast that we were reluctant to call it. As we walked the trail we had Least flycatchers, large numbers of Indigo Buntings, Yellow-throated Vireos and Bobolinks feeding in the fields. Other great birds included American Golden Plover, Great Egret, Northern Harrier, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Cooper's Hawk, Bald Eagle, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, American Kestrel, Blue-headed and Philadelphia Vireos, Pileated and Hairy Woodpeckers. We were fortunate to spot a Connecticut Warbler, plus Nashville and Mourning Warblers, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Lincoln's Sparrow, Scarlet Tanager and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. An Eastern Screech Owl was heard calling from a wooded area across the Wallkill. By the end of the morning we had had 14 species of wood warbler, 4 species of vireos and 6 species of Emberized finches. There were so many fantastic birds that it was impossible to choose a bird of the day. We finished our outing around noon, after which some of our members went to lunch at the Harvest Inn in Pine Island. Weather was 50 to 63 degrees, sunny with light winds. There was a total of 68 species seen. What an amazing day!

Kenridge Farm – October 3 – Amy Greher, Leader – no report submitted

6 ½ Station Road – October 6 – Liza Antony, Leader – **One Misty, Moisty, Morning, when cloudy was the weather (as the nursey rhyme goes)** There I met 13 birders all clothed in raingear and equipped with binos and scopes. The weatherman had predicted a cloudy day with 10% chance of showers; we got the 10% to our dismay! Temperature was in the high 50's. Some of us regretted not bringing gloves. After a brief discussion about how unreliable weather forecasts were, we decided to soldier on and bird. The warblers were not deterred by the weather and were flitting among the trees. As we were finally able to locate them among the leaves they decided to tease us by flying away! There was a brief debate about equipping each of the warblers with cell phones so that we could locate them (with GPS coordinates) and maybe call them and ask them to ID themselves!! We finally decided that there would not be a corporate sponsor for this action. Now on to the birds. The first bird of the trip was a Brown Thrasher which hadn't read the Sibley Field Guide, which states that the BRTH is inconspicuous, hidden in dense brush. Our bird was in plain sight, perched on the dead twig of a bush about 20 feet away, having a quiet conversation with a Gray Catbird sitting on the same bush. The thrasher gave us great looks for about 10 seconds. Interestingly, we had had a thrasher at the same location on this trip last year. The most numerous warbler of the trip was the Yellow-rumped. We saw 30, all counted by Bob! An elusive Blackpoll gave us our morning exercise chasing it through the trees. Just kidding! The only chasing we did was with our binos; we stayed on the trail. Finally the Blackpoll stayed in one spot for a millisecond and we were able to see the yellow feet and ID the bird. The other warblers we saw were Nashville, Northern Parula, Magnolia, Palm and Common Yellowthroat. Joe suggested the name for the Common Yellowthroat should be changed to Uncommon Yellow throat! Excellent suggestion! It was that kind of day. The pond/marsh yielded distant scope looks at some ducks which were identified by Gerhard as 4 Wood Ducks. The other ducks were a no-show. A Green Heron was spotted by eagle-eyed Tom and was seen well through Ajit's scope. A big thanks to Ajit and Bob for carrying scopes. My own spotting scope was resting at home. The hawks and vireos were a no-

show. In spite of the weather we had a fun morning of birding and talking with our fellow Mearnsers. Many thanks to all the excellent birders on the trip, making my job as recorder easy. We had a total of 35 species. I will post the list on Ebird. Good birding.

Goosepond – October 8 – Bill Iannone, Leader – Eleven members and two guests braved the sixty degree, cloudy Columbus Day trip with a constant drizzle including a 10 minute rain shower that sent us to our cars. However, the birds did not mind which resulted in 57 species for the highest count for a fall trip to Goosepond. We started at the Board Walk Trail, our latest hot spot, which provided excellent bird activity. The board walk and wetlands yielded 9 species of sparrows: Lincoln, Savannah, Field, Chipping, White-crowns as well as numerous Song, Swamp and White-throated Sparrows. Warblers were still here, represented by Tennessee, Nashville, Palm, Blackpoll, Black and White, Common Yellowthroat and Yellow-rumps. Woodpeckers were active in the mist. We had Red-bellied, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers and Northern Flicker and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. We had some of the usual flyovers of Wood Ducks and Mallards and some perching American Kestrels. It was a special treat to have a Yellow-billed Cuckoo that visited us at eye level for a while. We managed to fit in both kinglets and a Purple Finch. Four hardy members carried on to the parking lot and trail on Bull Mill Road on the other side of Goosepond State Park off of Laroe Road. The drizzle had stopped by then. This is becoming a small, fruitful area that offers a bird friendly environment for seeing additional species. We added Sharp-shinned Hawk, Eastern Bluebird, Great Blue Heron, Pileated Woodpecker and some Wild Turkeys. Among the vines and berries we were pleasantly surprised by two Swainson's Thrushes. However thanks to sharp-eyed Kathy and her high tech camera one of the thrushes turned out to be a Gray-cheeked Thrush. I would gladly accept the mist and drizzle for a good day of birding. We were having such a good day that we never got to the long Lazy Hill Road trail from Laroe Road.

"Big Sit" Glenmere Lake – October 13 - Kathy Ashman, Compiler – Our first official Big Sit! is in the books, and it was an amazing experience. Twelve of our members participated throughout the day: Karen Miller and I were the anchors. Bob Slechta, Joe Cullen, Scott Baldinger, Dave Baker, Linda Strohl, Grace Gloeckler, Della and Alan Wells, Kathleen Hranowsky and Matt Zeitler all gave of their time throughout the day to search for birds. The weather was not auspicious in the morning as it was pouring rain. The temperature was 46 degrees, skies were densely overcast with winds from the west at 4 mph and gusts to 6 mph. Sunrise was at 7:08 AM. Karen and I arrived at 7:15 and our first task was to set up the 17' diameter circle. We chose a spot on the edge of the lake and began looking for birds. The count officially began at 7:45 AM when the circle setup was completed. Our first bird of the day was a Double-crested Cormorant swimming in the lake. Despite the rain, the most warblers were seen in the first two hours when Karen and I were able to spot Tennessee, Yellow-rumped and Pine Warblers foraging in the trees around us. Two adult Bald Eagles flew over the lake and landed in trees on the opposite shore. Lighting was tough, so there were many we were unable to ID because we could not discern their color or markings in the gloom. Surprisingly, most of our passerines were spotted during the morning rains. Fortunately for us, the rain began to subside by around 10:30 AM and skies began to clear. Winds shifted to the northwest and increased in speed which set up conditions for a good raptor flight. During the day we observed migrating Osprey, Sharp-

shinned and Cooper's Hawks, American Kestrels, and a highlight 7 Peregrine Falcons. A pair of Red-shouldered Hawks were calling out and circling over the area, giving us great looks. The day took on the feeling of a Hawk Watch as raptors streamed south along the ridgeline as the northwest winds kicked in after the cold front passed. Woodpeckers were plentiful with all the usual species except Red-headed Woodpecker represented. In the afternoon, eagle-eyed Joe Cullen spotted an unusual bird on the water. On checking scope views of the bird we were delighted to find a solitary Brant! Though distant, we all got eyes on the bird and Alan Wells managed to get a great photo for documentation purposes. Members came and went during the day, and it was great fun chatting as we hunted for birds. A running tally was written on a white board so everyone could see our account. Several members took the opportunity to explore the Glenmere Lake trails during the day. Matt Zeitler arrived about 5:30 PM after ending his day at the mount Peter Hawk Watch and he helped Karen and me with raptor identification. He managed to spot a distant tern heading south, but to our regret it was too distant to get an ID. We closed up shop at 6:15 PM. Weather at the close was 52 degrees with clear skies, scattered clouds and northwest winds at 9 mph, gusts to 16 mph. We ended the day with 46 species (+5 other taxa) total, and 653 individual birds sighted. To see our eBird report go to ebird.org and search for checklist #S49172363. It was great fun and we're hoping to make this an annual club event. It would be terrific if more members of the club joined in next year. Who knows what surprises it will hold.

Croton Point – October 20 – Jodi Brodsky, Leader – no report submitted

Chadwick Lake – October 28 – Bob Slechta, Leader – My crystal ball still works pretty well! Eight months ago I scheduled this trip for Sunday instead of our usual Saturday to change things up a bit and low and behold Saturday was a total wash out! Even so only seven hardy souls came out today for a pretty good trip. While we had some mist for the first 30 minutes it didn't stop us from getting good stuff thanks to Bruce's scouting. At the south end of the lake we had a Common Goldeneye, 2 Pied-billed Grebes, 16 Ruddy Ducks, some Mallards, swans, a Double-crested Cormorant, and a Lesser Scaup. There was also some passerine activity with 200 feet of our cars which picked up once it stopped misting. We had nice looks at Brown Creeper, Yellow-rumps, Fox Sparrow, Hermit Thrush, American Robins, White-throated Sparrows and a good number of Golden-crowned Kinglets. Best of all were the nice restrooms we could avail ourselves of before heading to the north end of the lake and another short foray of birding as patches of blue sky appeared amongst the clouds. Here we added Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Field and Swamp Sparrows, Dark-eyed Junco, a real nice Winter Wren working a fallen tree, plus another Hermit Thrush, a couple of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, two Cooper's Hawks and a Sharpie. We ended the trip with 42 species and some nice sightings for our efforts.

Black dirt – November 10 – Karen Miller, Leader – I've noticed that many outing leaders, including myself, stress that there won't be many birds to share with the group. This being my first time leading the black dirt outing, I was also concerned that we may not be successful finding the birds. Starting at the Liberty Loop platform, my fears were quickly erased when we arrived to find the sky nearly full of birds. It was a great kick start to our morning. It was sunny with cold winds and temperatures in the low 40's. Our group of 12 birders enjoyed a large flock

of Northern Pintails flying in to join Canada Geese, Mute Swans, Green-winged Teal and Bufflehead. I was especially excited since the pintails are my favorite bird. I love their elegance and the white patch that swirls up the brown neck and head. Our next stop was at Owens Station Road across the state line in New Jersey to take advantage of the restrooms and check out the lake and surrounding area. Eight Buffleheads were spotted on the far side of the lake and a Northern Harrier was cruising over the nearby field. Skinners Lane was next on our agenda. We added Turkey Vultures, two more harriers, a Bald Eagle, approximately 125 American Crows, 50 Horned Larks, two Lapland Longspurs and one Snow Bunting to our list. Since we no longer have access to Warren Sod Farm and since the bridge on Route 12 was under construction, we had to drive the long way around to get to Lynch Road and Turtle Bay Road. We DID find some good birds though, so it was worth the trip. Included in our sightings was a Red-tailed Hawk, a Yellow-breasted Sapsucker, two Red-bellied Woodpeckers, four Fish Crow, and a White-breasted Nuthatch, three White - throated Sparrows, a Downy Woodpecker and a conservative 370 Red - winged Blackbirds with at least two Brown-headed Cowbirds. We headed off to lunch with a not-overwhelming list, but a rewarding morning of good times and good birding. We are scheduled to try this area again on March 9th. I hope you'll be there.

Southern Orange lakes – November 17 – Kathy Ashman, Leader – Our meeting point for the trip was at 8:30 at the Chester MacDonald's on a chilly November morning. We visited several lakes and ponds in southern Orange County including Glenmere Lake, Pine Hill Beaver Pond, Warwick Town Hall, Wickham Lake, Walton Lake and Round Lake. The waterfowl was disappointingly not as numerous as we had hoped, but we did have a good variety. Waterfowl seen were: Canada Goose, Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Mallard, American Black Duck, Northern Pintail, Ring-necked Duck, Greater and Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Hooded and Common Mergansers, Ruddy Duck and Pied-billed Grebe. Other birds observed on the trip were Black Vultures, Pileated Woodpecker, Double-crested Cormorant, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglets, American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, Dark-eyed Junco, Common Raven and Great Blue Heron. Our most productive locations were the Warwick Town Hall and Wickham Lake. Our most exciting find was a large flock of American Wigeon at Wickham Lake. We finished the day with a total of 44 species observed, and 17 species of waterfowl. Average temperatures for the day was around 30 degrees with WNW winds at 5-10 mph, and the weather was clear with scattered clouds. We completed the day around noon and had lunch at the Chester Diner.

Eastern Orange lakes – November 23 – Bob Slechta, Leader – The seven determined souls that braved the cold as they wondered what month it was were rewarded with a good day out birding. Even though the day started off around 7 degrees it really wasn't all that bad as there wasn't any wind and it was sunny. Unfortunately this cold snap froze over most of the lakes negating most of Bruce's pre-trip scouting. Thankfully there was usually a little open water somewhere on the lakes with Crestview and Washington completely open providing us with a good mix of ducks (14 species for our outing) with Brown's Pond giving us the best mix thanks to a secret path through the woods that Bruce lead us on. Today's waterfowl included a Barnacle/Canada Goose hybrid that Kathy teased out of a group of Canadas. Other sightings included Mute Swan, Wood Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, American Black Duck, Mallard Northern Shoveler, Green-

winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded and Common Mergansers and Ruddy Duck. Other birds of note in our travels were: Great Blue Heron (hanging in despite the ice), Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Peregrine Falcon (one of Bruce's buddies hanging out at Walmart), Fish Crow and Common Raven, Brown Creeper, Carolina Wren (two pair having a squabble at Chadwick Lake with one landing right at our feet, and I mean right at our feet!), both kinglets, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, American Tree Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and the best surprise-a couple of American Pipits spied (and we all got to see) on the hillside abutting the airport runways as we were scanning Crestview Lake. In all 50 species were tallied on what some of us thought would be a tough day due to the extreme cold.

Shawangunk Grasslands – November 24 – Tom and Jane, Leaders – no report available

Cape Ann, MA – November 30-December 2 – Jodi Brodsky, Leader – Our annual trek to Cape Ann started out on Friday with a bowl of fish chowder before heading over to the Fisherman's Monument. Ten of us gathered around the statue to document the beginning of our weekend. Among the Common Eiders (down in numbers from previous years) and scoters was one Black Guillemot. There were no white-winged gulls at the State Fishing Pier, but we did find a Razorbill. The next stop was Eastern Lighthouse Point. Out on the dog bar we had another Black Guillemot along with all three scoters and Red-breasted Mergansers. By the parking area a lovely flock of Snow Buntings was feeding along the edge of the shallow water. At Bass Rocks we picked up a few Purple Sandpipers. On Saturday we birded Parker River; highlights include a very close Barred Owl, Snowy Owl and a flock of Common Redpolls. A lone Bohemian Waxwing had been seen the day before, but we never saw it. At one of our last stops someone asked about Sanderlings. I won't mention names, but one of our members proceeded to explain how Sanderlings are not found here at this time only to be proven wrong moments later by two Sanderlings chasing waves. One of the attributes of birding is the never ending learning and wonderful surprises in the field. We ended the day at Salisbury Beach with more Dunlin, Snow Buntings, Long-tailed Ducks and amazing looks at harbor seals basking on the rocks. The last day was a wet mess and many folks decided to head back early. Four intrepid women, Karen Liz, Carlotta and I braved the elements and were treated to two Black-legged Kittiwakes and two very close Northern Gannets. By the end of the weekend we saw 54 species of birds.

Eastern Orange Christmas Count - December 15 – Bob Slechta, Compiler – see separate report

Duck Count – January 19 – submitted by Bob Slechta – Pulling off this year's Duck Count was a nail biter with a minor snow storm set for Friday AM and a major storm to hit late Saturday, the day of the count. I decided to trust the forecasts and stick with Saturday which worked out just fine. In fact Saturday morning was sunny! Unfortunately, our lakes were pretty well frozen over with only small patches open on a few along with streams, the Hudson and the Wallkill. Surprisingly that's where the bulk of the Canada Geese were, and not out feeding in the fields prior to the storm. Several records were topped this year with 7333 Canada Geese (versus 5249 last year) and 102 Mute Swans (versus 4 last year) being the most dramatic. We also bested last year with 38 American Black Ducks versus 5, 16 Bufflehead versus 2 and 22 Hooded Mergansers versus 6. The big difference I believe was that last winter was consistently cold

without a warm up in December like this year, so the lakes never reopened before refreezing. Other sightings on this year's count thanks to the diligent work of those who participated are: 2 Greater White-fronted Geese, 6 Snow Geese, 2 Cackling Geese, 497 Mallards, 1 Northern Shoveler 4 Ring-necked Ducks, 1 Common Goldeneye, 196 Common Mergansers and 1 Red-breasted Merganser for a total of 14 species (only 9 last year). Let's hope for open water next year!

Eagle Trip – January 26 – Gerhard Patsch, Leader – It was 24 degrees, partly cloudy with calm wind as 20 members and friends met for our annual Hudson River eagle trip. Starting at Iona Island we spotted 33 Bald Eagles right away! Most of the eagles were sitting on ice floes far below the scenic overlook. I was surprised since a week earlier I could only find a dozen eagles between Bear Mountain and Croton Point. A week of freezing temperatures prior to our field trip resulted in abundant ice floes and a huge influx of eagles. The day before, Bob Senerchia had spotted 77 Bald Eagles at Iona Island alone! To our knowledge that's never happened before. After an excellent start at Iona Island we made all our usual stops: Peekskill Bay, China Pier, Verplank, George's Island, Oscawana Park and Croton Point Park. There was plenty of ice on the Hudson River. Ice coverage was about 80% at Iona Island, gradually decreasing to about 30% at Oscawana and even less as we drove south to Croton Point. We found eagles at every spot. Many were perched in trees along both shorelines and in the surrounding highlands, often flying in tandem and tumbling through the air, and sitting on ice floes, giving us many opportunities to enjoy close looks. At one point we counted 18 Bald Eagles on a single slab of ice and by the end of the day we had sighted 177 Bald Eagles! Other raptors found along the way included several Red-tailed Hawks, two Cooper's Hawks, a Red-shouldered Hawk, found by Bruce Nott, a Northern Harrier at Croton Point, a perched Merlin at George's Island and a striking eye level Peregrine Falcon fly-by with prey in its talons at Iona Island scenic overlook. Other notables included two Red-breasted Mergansers, a least a dozen Great Cormorants, one Common Goldeneye, several Buffleheads, many Common Mergansers, Fish Crows, Common Ravens and five species of woodpeckers. Our last bird of the trip was a Great Horned Owl at Croton Point, giving us a total of 46 species. It was a thrilling day. The kind of day that makes you appreciate the beauty of the Hudson River Valley.

Jones Beach – February 2 – Jodi Brodsky, Leader – cancelled due to Polar Vortex!

2018 EASTERN ORANGE CHRISTMAS COUNT

No snow, no rain, no winds and 48 degrees...what more could we ask for? How about birds. Everyone agreed it was slow going on the count with birds hard to come by. Unfortunately it's probably harsh weather we need to prompt the birds to be more active looking for food making them easier to spot. Even so, our numbers are not too far from normal variability with a few noticeable declines like Canada Goose (no snow north?), American Crow (the Newburgh roost is defunct) and Dark-eyed Junco (about half our normal number). In the opposite direction we reached all time high counts for Red-bellied Woodpecker with 160 (which didn't break into double digits - 10+ till 1985, the 7th year of this count and has been in an upward trend ever since), Carolina Wren at 70 (another bird that took a while – in '88, to break into double digits then oscillated up and down but always in double digits), and lastly Common Grackle with 3065 (their numbers being much more variable/erratic, but generally much, much lower for the first 20 years). Since I brought up past count dates for this year's notables let me ply you with a few more interesting trends from 1979 to the present. Our first Bald Eagle showed up in 1983 and it wasn't until 1997 that it became a regular on the count, while both Turkey and Black Vultures first started showing up on counts in '90-91 before becoming regulars from '06 on with increasing numbers. American Kestrel and Canvasbacks on the other hand were regulars before dropping in '94 and '02 respectively with Kestrel occurring in single digits now versus double digits and Canvasbacks being unusual now from regularly showing up in the hundreds. The thing to do would be to research their trends on the Audubon Xmas Count database for all North America and see if their trends are regional or local phenomena or of bigger importance. Of Course all that data is generated by the dedicated field people and feeder watchers that participate every year whom I'd like to thank, along with the Gouldings for hosting the always enjoyable pot-luck count down at their lovely house and last but not least Ajit and Dave for their computer skills tallying and posting the results. See everyone next year!

Bob Slechta, Compiler



· "Tired of winter?"

Photo by Karen Miller

Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club Eastern Orange Christmas Count - Leader Sheet
12/15 / 2018

2018



SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL	SPECIES	TOTAL
Snow Goose		Red-headed Woodpecker		Rusty Blackbird	
Canada Goose	1784	Red-bellied Woodpecker	160	Common Grackle	3065
Mute Swan	30	Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	7	Brown-headed Cowbird	2
Wood Duck	4	Downy Woodpecker	128	House Finch	103
Gadwall	7	Hairy Woodpecker	12	Purple Finch	7
American Wigeon		Northern Flicker	40	Common Redpoll	
American Black Duck	5	Pileated Woodpecker	16	Pine Siskin	2
Mallard	352	American Kestrel	6	American Goldfinch	208
Northern Shoveler	cw	Merlin	1	House Sparrow	373
Northern Pintail		Peregrine Falcon			
Green-winged Teal		Eastern Phoebe	1		
Canvasback	3	Northern Shrike	1		
Ring-Necked Duck		Blue Jay	541	Rare/ Unusual Species	
Lesser Scaup		American Crow	640	Brant	
Long-tailed Duck		Fish Crow	15	Cackling Goose	
Common Goldeneye	1	Common Raven	cw	Blue-winged Teal	
Bufflehead	5	Horned Lark		Redhead	
Hooded Merganser	62	Black-capped Chickadee	261	Black Scoter	
Common Merganser	323	Tufted Titmouse	200	White-winged Scoter	
Ruddy Duck		Red-breasted Nuthatch	cw	Red-breasted Merganser	1
Ring-necked Pheasant		White-breasted Nuthatch	171	Ruffed Grouse	
Wild Turkey	53	Brown Creeper	3	Red-throated Loon	
Pied-Billed Grebe		Carolina Wren	70	Common Loon	
Double-crested Cormorant	1	Winter Wren	5	Horned Grebe	
Great Cormorant		Golden-crowned Kinglet	1	Red-necked Grebe	
Great Blue Heron	16	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	1	Great Egret	
Black Vulture	54	Eastern Bluebird	44	Northern Goshawk	
Turkey Vulture	24	Hermit Thrush		Broad-winged Hawk	
Bald Eagle	8	American Robin	107	Virginia Rail	
Northern Harrier	1	Gray Catbird	2	Bonaparte's Gull	
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	3	Northern Mockingbird	22	Northern Saw-whet Owl	
Cooper's Hawk	8	European Starling	3117	Say's Phoebe	
Red-shouldered Hawk	2	American Pipit		House Wren	
Red-tailed Hawk	82	Cedar Waxwing	29	Wood Thrush	
Rough-legged Hawk		Snow Bunting		Varied Thrush	
American Coot		Yellow-rumped Warbler	1	Brown Thrasher	
Killdeer		Eastern Towhee		Lapland Longspur	
Wilson's Snipe		American Tree Sparrow	33	Common Yellowthroat	
Ring-Billed Gull	920	Field Sparrow	cw	Wilson's Warbler	
Herring Gull	159	Savannah Sparrow		Yellow-breasted Chat	
Iceland Gull		Fox Sparrow		Chipping Sparrow	
Great Black-backed Gull	20	Song Sparrow	60	Lark Sparrow	
Rock Pigeon	515	Swamp Sparrow	6	Harris's Sparrow	
Mourning Dove	500	White-throated Sparrow	395	Brewer's Blackbird	
Eastern Screech Owl		White-crowned Sparrow		Baltimore Oriole	
Great Horned Owl	cw	Dark-eyed Junco	456	Pine Grosbeak	
Barred Owl	1	Northern Cardinal	166	White-winged Crossbill	
Short-eared Owl		Red-winged Blackbird	262	Evening Grosbeak	
Belted Kingfisher	9	Eastern Meadowlark			

15696 individuals / 72 species + 5 Count week species = 77 species total

I am not a poet, but I was inspired one sunny day to write the following:

Gray Catbirds on the Prowl

Such admirable things -

Acrobats without strings

And gasless wings.

Caterpillars, worms, and bugs stress

As feathered beings can confess.

This human is full of glee

Each time she sees thee.

I am sometimes successful at taking snapshots of several species in a single shot. Here are two:



Six species: fox sparrow, dark-eyed junco, house finch, white-throated sparrow, mourning dove, and American goldfinch (3). November 7, 2012



Six species: downy woodpecker, red-bellied woodpecker, dark-eyed junco (5), mourning dove (2), American tree sparrow, American goldfinch. January 25, 2019

Besides being an avid birder, I have been collecting bottle caps for around 40 years. Many in my collection were damaged by a fire, but I kept them even though they are rusty and not as pretty to look at. I decided to share the caps that have bird representations on them:



SPRING & SUMMER FIELD TRIP SCHEDULE – E.A. MEARNS CLUB

March trips (see last Feather for details): 3/2 Rye; 3/19 Black dirt; 3/16 Bashakill; 3/23 Oil City Road; 3/30 Eastern Orange lakes.

April 1 – Southern Orange lakes – Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) at the Chester McDonald's at 8:30AM to scour the lakes of Southern Orange County for ducks and passerines.

April 6 – Rye Playland – Meet Bob Slechta (541-8210) at the Playland parking lot at 8:30 AM for Osprey, egrets, Purple Sandpipers and more.

April 13 – Oil City Road – The target bird is Blue-winged Teal today along with other early migrants. Meet Karen Miller (381-3283) at the platform at 8:30 AM.

April 13 – Shawangunk Grasslands – In addition to American Woodcock there should still be some Short-eared Owls around. Meet Tom and Jane there at 7:00 PM (255-0565).

April 20 – 61/2 Station Road – Carlotta Shearson (234-8314) is the leader. Be there at 8:30 AM for early migrants: Yellow-rumped, Palm Warblers, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Blue-headed Vireo.

April 27 – Bashakill – Meet Joyce Depew (978-9952) at the Stop Sign Trail at 8:00 AM for the first big spring movement.

May 1, Wednesday – Glenmere Lake – Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) to explore the great habitats and trail system as the birds start pouring in. Meet her there at 8:00 AM.

May 4 – Doodletown – Be at the 9W pull off at 8:00 AM to meet Bob Slechta (541-8210). We will look for Hooded and Cerulean Warblers by the dozens and much more.

May 5, Sunday – Storm King Art Center – Meet Bob Slechta at 8:30 AM. More details will be on the Mearns website.

May 8, Wednesday – Kenridge Farm – with Amy Greher (783-6363), Leader. Be at the Dog Park lot at 7:30 AM for a "Great Day" of birding at this gem of a spot.

May 11 – Bashakill – Meet Gerhard Patsch (255-5840) at 7:30 AM at the Stop Sign Trail and see if we can get 75 species or more.

May 13, Monday – Goosepond – Meet Bill Iannone (783-7467) at the Route 17M Boardwalk trail at 7:30 AM for warblers, vireos, thrushes, etc.

May 17 & 18 – Break 100!! – Countdown Pot Luck at the Fitzpatrick's (496-7718) at 5:00 PM Saturday. Let them know who is coming and what you are bringing. 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 22 – Stewart State Forest – Meet Bill Fiero (728-5208) at the North Ridge Road parking lot at 8:00AM and search out local breeders and late migrants.

May 25 – Shawangunk Grasslands – Meet Tom and Jane will lead (255-0565) at 7:30 AM for grassland species and maybe the Henslow's Sparrow will be back.

June 1 Edgar A. Mearns 60th Anniversary Dinner – Save the date. More information to follow.

August 24 – Oil City Road – Joyce Depew (978-9952) will be at the platform at 8:00 AM. Let's see what turns up this year like the Least Bittern last year.

August 31 – Black dirt – Meet Karen Miller (381-3283) at the Jolly Onion at 8:00 AM and see if we can find some Buff-breasted Sandpipers and Golden Plovers.

September 7 – Doodletown – with Alan and Della Wells (942-5751). Be at the 9W pull off at 8:00 AM for a rewarding trip of fall migrants at this premier birding spot.

September 14 – Black dirt with Dave Baker (446-4030). Meet at the Jolly Onion at 8:30 AM for another shot at Golden Plovers, Buff-breasted Sandpipers, etc.

September 18, Wednesday – Hamptonburgh Preserve – Meet Bill Fiero (728-5208) at 8:00 AM to see what we can find on our first fall trip here.

September 21 – Bashakill – Meet Scott Baldinger (888-2333) at the Deli Fields at 8:30 AM. Philadelphia Vireos, Gray-cheeked Thrush and early Lincoln's Sparrows are all possible.

September 28 – Winding Waters – Meet Kathy Ashman (294-6140) at 8:00 AM. Connecticut Warbler? Dickcissel? Perhaps!

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. 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!
